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## The Contribution of Ancient Turks to World Civilization

### Abstract

The article is dedicated to an interesting and nationally valuable issue that remains relevant in our modern history. Analyzing the historical facts from reliable sources, separate works of Russian and European historians, the author of the article comes to the conclusion that the ancestors of modern Turkic peoples made a great and valuable contribution to human culture on the eve of the current civilization. He shows that, despite what some politicized scientists say, the Turkish people were not a new, young or non-historical nation at all, but they are carriers of rich history with their ancient and rich traditions and culture of statehood. It is possible to trace the historical development from the distant past by the substitution of ethnoses and their ethnonyms, and in reality this is a great history, an unbreakable history of time and generations The article rightly shows that we have historical roots in the ancient Turks, and it is manifested not only in ethnonyms, but also in the essence of the people and the nation.

**Keywords:** Ancient Turks, World Civilization, Wheeled Carts, Rock Inscriptions, Glozel Inscriptions, Contribution

## Eski Türklerin Dünya Medeniyetine Katkıları

### Öz

Makale, modern tarihimizde geçerliliğini koruyan ilginç ve ulusal açıdan değerli bir konuya adanmıştır. Tarihi gerçekleri güvenilir kaynaklardan, Rus ve Avrupalı tarihçilerin ayrı ayrı eserlerinden analiz eden makalenin yazarı, modern Türk halklarının atalarının mevcut medeniyetin arifesinde insan



*kültürüne büyük ve değerli bir katkı yaptığı sonucuna varıyor. Bazı siyasallaşmış bilim adamlarının söylediklerinin aksine, Türk halkının hiç de yeni, genç veya tarihsiz bir millet olmadığını, aksine eski ve zengin gelenekleri ve devlet kültürüyle zengin bir tarihin taşıyıcıları olduklarını göstermektedir. Etnosların ve etnonimlerinin yer değiştirmesiyle uzak geçmişten tarihsel gelişimi izlemek mümkündür ve gerçekte bu büyük bir tarihtir, zamanın ve nesillerin kırılmaz bir tarihidir Makale haklı olarak eski Türklerde tarihsel köklerimiz olduğunu ve bunun sadece etnonimlerde değil, aynı zamanda halkın ve milletin özünde de tezahür ettiğini göstermektedir.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Eski Türkler, Dünya Medeniyeti, Tekerlekli Arabalar, Kaya Yazıtları, Glozel Yazıtları, Katkı

### Introduction

The ancient Turks lived while moving with their livestock, primarily with horses, across the steppes. They domesticated horses at very early stages, taking care of them, feeding them, and even improving their breeds. They worshiped the horse, which became a prominent figure (Cardini, 2000). The horse was indispensable in agriculture and a fighter in military clashes, both in attack and defense. It could even save the rider from danger by swiftly exiting the battlefield when needed. Thus, skillful horse control became essential. The first necessity was likely the invention of the bridle, as it was crucial to control the horse easily. Fortunately, the Turks had plenty of leather to make reins. In battle, on horseback, it was important to shoot arrows, strike with a spear, and use other combat tools. This led to the invention of the saddle. Initially, they used leather pads, but it became clear that this was insufficient, as it did not provide enough stability for the rider. The long life of the nomads and hunters on horseback led to the invention of the stirrup—a real breakthrough in controlling the horse. With the stirrup, the rider could stand and shoot arrows, aim a spear at the enemy, and fight with a sword. Later, they learned to shoe horses. S. I. Vaynshtein and S. G. Klyashtorny confirm that the Turks invented the saddle (Vainshtein, 1968). However, L. R. Kyzlasov disagrees, stating that different types of saddles existed and were known to the Huns and Sarmatians (Klyashtorny, 1964). But weren't the Huns Turks? And among the Sarmatians, the Turks predominated. Thus, the “heavy cavalry” of the Turks' military forces emerged. This type of combat unit, known as “heavy cavalry,” was transferred from the “steppe peoples” to China. Cardini writes that “the Turks forced China to create a new type of army.” A few hundred years later, the Iranians also adopted the “heavy cavalry” type. The lesson Persia taught the Roman Empire forced Rome to adopt this form of cavalry (Cardini, 2000). Thus, the achievements of the nomadic Turks spread from Central Asia to both the East (China) and the West (the Roman Empire). By the 3rd-4th centuries AD, the saddle was considered a luxury item in the Roman Empire. There is evidence

that at this time, saddles and horseshoes were commonplace among the Huns and Avars. The equipment of warriors and horses originated before Christ and was refined throughout the first millennium AD.

It is known that the Roman army used chariots at the beginning of the AD era. However, in the Chunlut gallery in northern Mongolia, rock carvings depict reindeer-oxen yoked to chariots, whose spoked wheels can be counted. There are eight of them, and the most cautious scientists confirm that these images date back at least 6,000 years. At that time, Europe did not yet have wheels. The need for wheels as a means of transport arose much earlier among the nomadic Turks. And all of humanity's subsequent development took place on wheels. The ancient Turkic-speaking Scythians gave rise to the Huns, who in the first millennium AD merged with new Turkic tribes and peoples. History consists of the connection between time and space, generations and territories. Therefore, it is natural that the ancient Turks are also part of our historical roots, not just in ethnonyms but in the essence of the people and nation itself. The above mentions the equipment of the warhorse and warrior with gear such as saddles, reins, stirrups, and other items made of metal and leather. Which tribes lived in the metallurgical region in northeastern Iran, i.e., Central Asia? Turkic-speaking Saka-Massagetae, ancient Kangars-Kangly, and Iranian-speaking tribes lived there. Turkish historian Fakhreddin Kuzoglu writes that from the beginning of our era, Turkish tribes such as Kumans, Hephthalites, and Kipchaks lived there (Cardini, 2000). L. N. Gumilyov wrote that the Turks of Central Asia were the first to introduce iron production using industrial methods, which allowed them to assert their independence from China and Tibet. If this is so, it happened before 2852 BC, as iron and gold were known in China between 2852-2737 BC (Klyashtorny, 1964). Greek mythology localizes the chained Prometheus in the rocks of "Mountainous Scythia." This is either the Caucasus or Asia. Aeschylus connects his hero closely with fire and ironworking. In ancient times, many peoples, especially the Turks, worshiped fire and ironworking. Shamans adorned their clothes with iron ornaments. T. Cardini considers the iron ornaments of Turkish shamans to be the precursor of the iron armor worn by European knights. Shamans, making noise with these amulets, could subdue or drive away spirits. The blacksmith made these amulets for the shamans.

The presence of such a proverb among the Yakuts, who came from the south in the early second millennium AD, is no coincidence: "The blacksmith and shaman are birds of the same nest." Russians were greatly surprised by the development of metallurgy among the Yakuts. Metallurgy among the Yakuts is a legacy inherited from the Kurumchi culture of the Baikal

region, dating back to the 2nd millennium BC. Academic A. Okladnikov writes that *"the most characteristic feature of this culture is the high level of iron processing ... The iron they obtained from ore was 99.43% pure metal"* (Kyzlasov, 1979, p. 295). He stated that the Yakuts were descendants of the Kurikans of the Baikal region, who were part of the Turkic-speaking Huns. One branch of the Huns, involved in ironworking, settled in present-day Dagestan at the beginning of the AD era. Ironworking with fire and ore was considered sacred and mysterious. Blacksmiths passed their skills only to their own kind, and when they died, their tools were buried with them. In the Volga-Bulgar territory, the process of smelting metal was kept as secret as the apple of one's eye. This was an ancient Turkic tradition. Myths and other folk creations related to iron, fire, and swords spread in Western Europe, recalling or replacing Eastern traditions. Long swords in Rome were very expensive and considered sacred weapons (Okladnikov, 1955). Need and demand constantly urged an increase in production. Heavy cavalry, wheeled carts, and metal-made combat equipment were more necessary for the nomadic Turks—wanderers of the vast steppes and hunters.

Fortunately, the Altai, Sayan, and modern Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and, finally, the Caucasus and Ural mountain ranges—the territories where the Turkic peoples lived—were rich in metal ores, especially gold and silver deposits. Fortunately, these deposits were not located deep underground but in the upper layers. Gold was obtained in its natural state, in nuggets, especially in the mountainous regions. Generally, gold was the first metal humans acquired. The Altai was particularly rich in gold. It is known that the Greeks, as early as the 2nd millennium BC, organized expeditions to the South Caucasus for the "golden fleece." They even established colonies in ancient Colchis in the 6th century BC. However, there was little gold there. Rumors about gold came from the East. The wealth of the ancient Scythians (Ishkuz) in gold is well known. If we consider that those around the Black Sea came from Asia, we can conclude that the gold items they had were brought from there, as there were no gold deposits around the Black Sea in the 8th-5th centuries BC. Traders from the East who brought gold also spoke about it. In the 6th-8th centuries AD, Arab invasions reached the Caucasus and the Byzantine Empire. The importance of gold increased. Greedy European feudal lords embarked on Crusades to Syria and Palestine to seize Eastern gold, masking their intentions under the guise of Christianity. The Fourth Crusade against Constantinople, organized by the Christian Pope, further confirms this. However, even here, their hunger for gold was not satisfied. How, then, could they obtain gold? Rumors circulated that India was rich in gold. By the late 15th century, explorers like Columbus and Vasco da Gama set sail to

reach India by sea. The first reached America and began to rob and kill the Aztec Indian tribes for their gold. The second discovered the sea route to Asia and India for Europeans, again for gold. The Aztecs had amassed a lot of gold. Gold's homeland is Asia and America. Not only India but also other countries, including Turkish lands, were rich in gold. Considering that in all modern Turkic languages, the word for gold is "altın," we understand that this concept goes far back in history.

Gold Buddhas, golden domes, and other golden objects adorned Central Asia, South Siberia, and the Sayan-Altai regions, beautifying these ancient lands. In the Pazyryk culture in Altai, human figures made of wood, ibex horns covered with gold leaf were found in the excavated burial grounds. This historical monument is more than 2,500 years old, dating back to the 5th century BC. How many years passed before the use of gold leaf? Even today, applying such technology is complex and difficult. Moreover, these golden items prove the antiquity and richness of the Altai in gold. The wandering nomadic Turks in the mountains and steppes likely initially obtained gold in its natural nugget form. Gold extraction by washing gold-bearing soil seems to have come later. The Turks did not always live as nomads. Sometimes they led a settled life, engaging in agriculture, and at other times, due to the scarcity of pastures, they moved to more distant regions. The term "nomadic" should not be seen as derogatory. It is a viable economic system that can serve as a model. Over time, the Turks built cities, created states, engaged in farming and livestock breeding.

It is time to return to rock carvings. Here is an ancient settlement on the Middle Yenisei. Their houses were built from wooden beams, with cauldrons and livestock—sheep, cattle, horses, and reindeer—nearby, and horsemen are depicted. The horseman wears a tall hat, and dogs are shown beside his feet (Cardini, 2000). This life of the Turks dates back two thousand years before Christ. It is believed that the rock carvings depict the life of the Yenisei Kyrgyz. Contrary to what our detractors claim, writing emerged very early among the Turks. In Central Asia, in Tuva, a calendar was found that not only counted years but also allowed for calculating solar and lunar eclipses. Archaeologist V. E. Zarichev writes: *"It is enough to understand how complex the creation of calendars was and how precise calculations were needed to confidently believe that those who lived in Siberia 18,000 years ago had mathematical, geometric, and astronomical knowledge"* (Pal, 1983, p. 220).

There is no need to identify them as Indo-Europeans, Turks, or even Chinese, as they were not called these names at the time. The main point is that ancient Asian civilization existed.

In 1924, nearly three thousand texts were discovered in France, and these texts were only deciphered and read using the Turkish language through the help of Roman letters (Larochev, 1980). According to scholars, these letters and writings are 6-5 thousand years old. There is nothing surprising in this, considering that many Turkic-speaking tribes existed among the Scythians in the 6th-5th centuries BC. Researchers have found traces of the Turkish language in the Sumerian language, which is also 6,000 years old (Elveren, 1999). It is known that the modern alphabet was created based on the Phoenician script. This appeared in the second millennium BC. The Greeks adopted this alphabet in the 8th century BC. By the first millennium BC, Latin letters emerged under the influence of the Etruscan script, and the Etruscans were Turkic-speaking Scythians living in Aprilia (Sulejmenov, 1975). From this, it becomes clear that the Turkish script is older than the Phoenician script. It is interesting that regardless of where rock and cave inscriptions are found, they are initially studied from the perspective of identifying Indo-European languages. Then, scholars in the Uralic studies field begin attempting to decipher them. Only after this do Turkologists start studying them based on Turkic languages. Strangely, many times, these attempts are successful, as was the case with the famous Turkic runes.

Many specialists have studied rock and cave paintings and inscriptions. However, here we will discuss the work of Turkish scholar Kazım Mirşan. He re-examined rock and cave inscriptions and runic writings, verifying the results of other researchers. In this case, we are particularly interested in his book "The Origin of Alphabetic Writing" (Mirşan, 1994)

The main conclusion of Kazım Mirşan's book refutes the following traditional premises of historical science:

1. All alphabets were formed under the influence of the Phoenician alphabet.
2. The oldest culture in Europe is Greek culture.
3. Scythian culture cannot be older than Greek culture.
4. The Etruscans originated on the shores of the Aegean Sea and came to Etruria from there.
5. Turks borrowed runic writing from Syrians.
6. The Uyghur alphabet is not a continuation of runic writing.
7. The earliest Turks could not have been Europeans.

Kazım Mirşan rejects all these traditional premises based on concrete material analysis. He examines pictograms (ancient forms of writing) found in Siberia, Kazakhstan, Abakan-Yenisei, the shores of the Lena River, the Altai Mountains (in the CIS, Mongolia, and Siberia), Eastern Turkestan (Xinjiang and northern Afghanistan), Anatolia, Romania, Greece,

Switzerland, Italy, France, and northern Spain, painted 20,000 years ago, and petroglyphs carved into rocks and stones a thousand years ago, showing how alphabetic writing emerged. Among the Turks, too, this method led to the creation of the Turkish script. To confirm this hypothesis, he cites the example of Turkish inscriptions carved on stone in France 4,500 years ago that he claims were written in Turkish.

Kazım Mirşan explains the history of these stone inscriptions in France. In 1924, a landowner near the city of Vichy in the Allier department of central France discovered over three thousand ancient writing fragments on his land. They went down in history as "Glozel inscriptions." For 60 years, scholars attempted to decipher them based on Indo-European languages, but without success. One day, Parisian pianist Halik Tarcan, who loved reading books on history and ethnography in his spare time, paid attention to these inscriptions. He showed copies of these Glozel inscriptions to Turkish scholar Kazım Mirşan, an expert on ancient writings. Kazım Mirşan's research proved the Turkish nature of these writings, which were presented in a conference at the Sorbonne University in March 1993, demonstrating that the ancient Turkish Glozel inscriptions are older than the Etruscan inscriptions. The Etruscans adopted their writing from the Glozel inscriptions, and in turn, Etruscan inscriptions influenced the development of the Latin alphabet and, to some extent, the Cyrillic alphabet. Naturally, these claims need thorough verification and should be accepted as hypotheses (Zakiyev, 2003). However, even so, it can be assumed that in ancient times, there was a Turkish area on the territory of modern France, which was later forgotten by the French language. According to Kazım Mirşan, before the Phoenician script, there were proto-Turkic letters, which he conditionally calls UW-ON. Based on these letters, the proto-Semitic (Phoenician, proto Byzantine, even proto-Greek and Ionian) scripts emerged. All this suggests that Turkish culture has deep historical roots, but unfortunately, Turkologists have yet to fully explore this. Writing and books are great achievements of human civilization. Turks have contributed to world culture in this area as well. People wrote on stone, rock, papyrus, and parchment. They used hieroglyphs, drawings, and signs. Cuneiform writing was first spread in the East. The writing disk found on the island of Crete, which is 3,500 years old, has not yet been deciphered by anyone.

Thus, it may be possible to read these and other writings with the help of the ancient Turkic languages, just as the Turkish texts found in France were deciphered. Many materials were used for writing, but they were cumbersome, difficult, and expensive. A need arose for a more convenient material, and that material was paper. History tells us that paper was first

invented in China at the beginning of the new era. According to legend, this great invention belonged to a slave from East Turkestan. The name of the slave has been lost in legend, but the name of the great Khan's official, the slave's owner, remains. His name was Cai Lun. Before that, the slave had prepared writing materials from bamboo-like reeds. This required great effort. During the process, the slave developed another method, obtaining writing material paper from tree bark (Zakiyev, 1995; Pal, 1983). According to legend, the Chinese emperor ordered the invention to be kept secret, and the slave was sentenced to an honorable death. The slave from East Turkestan labored over the production of writing material. Through labor experience, paper was created. Paper was made by hand and spread widely in China by the 2nd century AD. Its production method was kept secret for a long time. After the Arabs conquered Central Asia, they learned how paper was made. Paper reached Europe through the Arabs. By the end of the first millennium, the Arabic language dominated science and literature among Eastern peoples, including the Turks, becoming the dominant language across Eurasia. In Europe, the Latin language prevailed and became dominant. On its basis, other written languages formed. In the 11th century, German, English, and Irish appeared; in the 12th century, Spanish, Portuguese, and Norwegian; in the 13th century, Italian, Danish, Swedish, Hungarian, and Czech. In the East, including among the Turks, books written in manuscript form spread more widely than in Europe. In the first millennium, Khwaja Ahmed Bolgari, Yakub ibn Noğman al-Bolgari, and Tajjaddin Khwaja Bolgari wrote in the 10th-11th centuries. As we can see, the Turks did not lag behind Europeans in creating world civilization, and sometimes even surpassed them. Mahmoud Kashgari compiled a dictionary of Turkic languages as early as the 11th century. Which European can be compared to him? (Alishev, 2000). The ancestors of modern Turkic peoples made significant contributions to the culture of humanity at the dawn of civilization. Contrary to the claims of some politicized scholars, Turkic peoples are neither young nor "non-historical," but possess an ancient and rich history.

### **Conclusion**

The ancient Turkic world spans a vast period and an endless expanse of territory. In very ancient times, the Turks inhabited a vast area. To the north lay the taiga and tundra, to the west—the Roman Empire, to the east—China, and to the south—Turkestan, the Parthian state, and India. These high mountains and wide valleys, endless steppes, and plains were home to nomadic herders, shepherds, hunters, and warriors, where countless herds of horses grazed. The Bible called them the giants Gog and Magog. Even today, Christians and the Bible believe in their existence (Gog and Magog mean terrifying and fearsome people). During this time,



various Turkic-speaking tribes, clans, and peoples lived on these lands. Sometimes they fought among themselves or launched campaigns against others. But life continuously moved forward. Alongside material development, spiritual culture also advanced. It is possible to trace this development through the replacement of ethnic groups and their ethnonyms from the distant past. In reality, this is a great history, a history of the inseparable connection between time and generations. From this point of view, modern Turkic peoples, like other peoples, have deep historical roots.

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