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## THE ORIGINS OF LAVISH HOSPITALITY AMONG THE TURKIC PEOPLES OF CENTRAL ASIA

**Abstract:** The purpose of the article is to study the origins of hospitality among the nomads of Central Asia, to determine the features and significant details in the art of showing respect and honors to guests. The author traces the influence of nomadic lifestyle, landscape and climate on the formation of a special culture of hospitality among the peoples of the Great Steppe. Forced or planned migration in search of better pastures, constant military operations, diseases caused powerful demographic damage to small nomadic peoples and increased the value of every human life. The influence of the ladder system of inheritance among the Central Asian Turks in the Middle Ages allowed to save the lives of relatives and gave the right to the title of kagan to every man from this family. The article emphasizes the influence on the education of the culture of hospitality of the code of laws of the Mongolian period, recorded in the great book of Yasa, and played a legal role in the consolidation of these rules for centuries. Historical and anthropological views expand the study of this topic and offer readers of English-speaking countries a deeper acquaintance with nomadic cultures, the heirs of which are the Turkic peoples of Central Asia

**Keywords:** nomads, the Great Steppe, hospitality, life expectancy, combat unit, people's army, heredity, diseases, genghis khan, the great book of Yas, hierarchy, security, genealogy, place of honor, the role of a man.

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## ИСТОКИ ШИРОКОГО ГОСТЕПРИИМСТВА У ТЮРСКИХ НАРОДОВ ЦЕНТРАЛЬНОЙ АЗИИ

**Аннотация:** Целью статьи «Истоки происхождения широкого гостеприимства у тюркских народов Центральной Азии» является изучение истоков гостеприимства у кочевников Центральной Азии, определение особенностей и значимых деталей в искусстве оказывать уважение и почет гостям. Автор прослеживает влияние кочевого образа жизни, ландшафта и климата на становление особой культуры гостеприимства у народов Великой Степи. Вынужденная или запланированная миграция в поисках лучших пастбищ, постоянные военные действия, болезни наносили мощный демографический урон небольшим по численности кочевым народам и повышали ценность каждой человеческой жизни. Влияния лестничной системы престолонаследия у центрально азиатских тюрков в эпоху средневековья позволила сохранить жизни родственников и предоставляла права каждому мужчине данного рода претендовать на титул кагана. В статье сделан акцент на влияние в воспитании культуры гостеприимства свода законов монгольского периода, зафиксированных в Великой книге Яса и сыгравший юридическую роль в закреплении этих правил на долгие столетия. Исторический и антропологический взгляды расширяют исследования данной темы и предлагают читателям англоязычных стран более глубоко познакомиться с номадическими культурами, наследниками которых являются тюркские народы Центральной Азии

**Ключевые слова:** кочевники, Великая Степь, гостеприимство, продолжительность жизни, боевая единица, народ-войско, лестничное престолонаследие, болезни, Чингисхан, Великая книга Яса, иерархия, безопасность, санжыра, почетное место, роль мужчины.

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## БОРБОРДУК АЗИЯДАГЫ ТҮРК ЭЛДЕРИНИН МЕЙМАНДОСТУГУНУН БАШАТЫ

**Кыскача мазмуну:** Макаланын максаты-Борбор Азиядагы көчмөн меймандостуктун келип чыгышын изилдөө, конокторду сыйлоо жана сыйлоо искусствосунун өзгөчөлүктөрүн жана маанилүү деталдарын аныктоо. Автор көчмөн жашоо образынын, пейзаждын жана климаттын Улуу Даланын элдеринин арасында меймандостуктун өзгөчө маданиятын калыптандырууга тийгизген таасирин изилдейт. Жакшы сүрөттөрдү, туруктуу аскердик операцияларды, ооруларды издөө үчүн күч же пландаштырылган миграция чакан көчмөн элдерге катуу демографиялык зыян келтирди жана ар бир адамдын жашоосунун баалуулугун жогорулатты. Орто кылымдардагы арктикалык түрктөрдүн мурас тутумунун таасири туугандарынын өмүрүн сактап калууга мүмкүндүк берди жана ушул тукумдагы ар бир эркекке каган титулуна укук берди. Макалада ястын Улуу китебинде жазылган Монгол мезгилиндеги мыйзам кодекси меймандостук маданиятын тарбиялоого тийгизген таасири баса белгиленип, бул эрежелерди кылымдар бою бекемдөөдө юридикалык роль ойногон. Тарыхый жана антропологиялык көз караштар бул теманы изилдөөнү кеңейтип, англис тилдүү өлкөлөрдүн окурмандарына Көчмөн маданияттар менен терең таанышууну сунуш кылат, алардын мураскорлору түрк элдери.

**Түйүндүү сөздөр:** көчмөндөр, Улуу Талаа, меймандостук, өмүрдүн узактыгы, согуштук бөлүк, элдик армия, тукум куучулук, оорулар, Чыңгыз хан, Ястын улуу китеби, иерархия, коопсуздук, генеалогия, ардактуу орун, адамдын ролу

The origins of the hospitality of the Kyrgyz people lie in the historical past of the nomads of Central Asia. The endless expanses of the Great Eurasian Steppe, stretching from the Black Sea coast to the shores of the Pacific Ocean, have become the homeland for numerous nomadic peoples. Nomadic states were born and died here: the world's first nomadic empire of the Huns in the II century BC, the Turkic khaganates in the middle of the VI-XII centuries, the Mongol Empire of Genghis Khan in the XIII century, and in the XVIII century the last nomadic empire of the Dzungars put an end to the long and complicated history of the nomadic states of Eurasia. The need to overcome large steppe expanses and mountain landscapes brought up in nomads fortitude, endurance and endurance in men, women and children. The nomadic lifestyle required special qualities from people that could ensure high survival in conditions of planned or unexpected migration. We should not forget about the low life expectancy of a person in the Middle Ages among the peoples of Central Asia and the high level of infant mortality among the same nomads. In addition, endless military actions in the struggle for fertile pastures reduced the population of nomads. Considering these conditions in which the Kyrgyz and other nomads of Central Asia lived, the attitude to individual human life was extremely respectful. In order to raise one male warrior, it was necessary to make a huge comprehensive effort on the part of all relatives. From here we get such an attitude towards any traveler, guest, lost wanderer.

A Kyrgyz guest is a gift that can become his close friend, protector, patron, or even a relative.

The culture of hospitality among the nomads was expressed in respect for any man: an aksakal, a young guy and even a very young boy. All the people understood one simple truth that this is not just a man, but a warrior who, in case of mortal danger, will always stand up for the protection of the entire tribe. To put it in military terms, then every man is one combat unit that must be protected. Therefore, in the house of the Kyrgyz, any man will always sit in a place of honor and receive the most expensive gifts. Such a respectful attitude towards a man among the Turks was expressed in the tradition of the sanzhyra – this is the Turkic version of the family tree. As it is known, an important part of the cultural and genetic identity of the Turks was expressed through the knowledge of their ancestors in the male line up to the 7th generation - sanzhyra, which was passed from mouth to mouth. Every boy learned by heart and knew his male ancestors until the end of his days, and thus forever found himself included in this list of the genealogical code of his people. A stranger, being a guest, could quickly find out the degree of kinship with any person in this house, and thereby strengthened and expanded his family ties. Thus, hospitality played a very practical meaning among the nomads of Central Asia. Due to the fact that any Kyrgyz always carried with him knowledge about his roots, he could easily find relatives in any hospitable house. The person acquired new connections, which, in the conditions of constant movement across the Great Steppe, became a huge moral and psychological support, material benefit and military protection.

The other side of the wide hospitality of the Turkic peoples is an extremely respectful attitude towards older men and women. Adult people among the nomads were considered to be carriers of vast experience, age-old wisdom, valuable everyday advice, ancient legends. Therefore, communication with aksakals and baibiche (elderly and respected men and women) is the acquisition of new knowledge and invaluable experience. The laws of hospitality and the strictest rules of the feast existed and continue to operate today. Before sitting down at the table, the age is determined and only after that the guests can take their seats according to the hierarchical age sequence. An interesting tradition of blessing the owners of the house is “bata”, which is expressed in the wish of health and prosperity of the host party, and gives “bata” the oldest and most revered guest. It was believed that such a blessing gave a certain sacredness to the house, protected it from misfortunes and diseases, brought happiness and well-being. In addition, the rumor spread among the people that the guests were respected and honorable people and they were given wide hospitality. This raised the status and honor of the family, which was generous and hospitable.

The next important source of the wide hospitality of the Central Asian peoples was the ladder system of succession to the throne. Nomadic state formations were characterized by high mobility and fragility. Either religion or a rigid bureaucratic system was necessary to consolidate the people and the state. However, the nomads had neither, especially in the early Middle Ages. The worship of the god Tengri was distinguished by freedom and was not conditioned by strict

rules and rituals, as it was and is in the Abrahamic religions. Nomads did not create an extensive bureaucratic apparatus like the Chinese bureaucracy, which also contributed to freer relations within tribal structural formations. “The Turkic rulers did not have the cement that Islam was for the caliphs of Damascus and Baghdad, and for the Chinese emperors — a developed bureaucracy. The good feelings or personal qualities of the governors did not serve as a guarantee. His personal interest was necessary, and only the prospect of growth could create such an interest. This perspective was given by the ladder, or regular, order of occupation of the throne.” [ 1 ] The ladder system or the generic principle of inheritance assumed the transfer of hereditary rights first horizontally - between brothers, from older to younger until the end of the generation, and only then vertically - between generations, again to the eldest of the younger generation brothers. Such an organization of the succession to the throne gave a chance to become close to the kagan to a fairly large circle of people and, accordingly, pushed people to treat people more carefully and carefully, because a little-known person can suddenly become an influential figure in the state. Gradually, this inheritance system began to narrow down and could no longer fulfill the main task - to unite a loose, diverse, nomadic organization and was preserved selectively, and only as an archaic relic of the past. However, the power of tradition remained firmly in the consciousness of the people and continued to be embodied in such concepts as “el” - the people, the country and “zhurt”-close relatives connected by blood ties. Considering the fact that nomadic peoples, like mercury, could quickly unite into a single and cohesive organization in the face of a common enemy, but they could also easily disperse, losing all ties. One can quote the words from the epic “Manas”: “To feed a clever bird from a kite, to create one people from different tribes” (Telikush taptap kush kylyp, tentigen zhynap zhurt kylyp) [ 2 ]. The concept of “Ata-Zhurt” has entered the Kyrgyz language, which means “fatherland” in translation, but if you do a literal translation, then here you can see two words: “ata” - father and the already well-known concept of “zhurt”. Thus, it can be concluded that during the period of the highest consolidation, the Kyrgyz perceived their people as close relatives with a common ancestor-father.

In the XIII century, a powerful Mongol empire emerged, which became the largest land power in the history of mankind. To create and keep in one state a multitude of peoples with different languages, beliefs and cultural traditions is an extremely difficult and almost impossible task in the conditions of the Middle Ages. This article will not consider the political, economic, religious and other aspects that led to the formation of the empire of Genghis Khan.

The “Great Book of Yasa” is a kind of code of Mongol laws compiled by Genghis Khan, whose main goal was to unite the disparate Mongolian and Turkic tribes into a single centralized state. The original text has not reached us, but the Eastern authors of the XIII-XV centuries. the famous Persian historians Rashid al-Din and Juveini, the Arab geographer and historian Makrizi, the Syrian historian Gregory Ab-ul-Faraj left numerous quotations from the “Great Yasa” in their writings.

According to the laws of Genghis Khan, it was considered the greatest crime and was punishable by death if someone refused a traveler water and food. The one who killed the guests, Yasa equated with

betrayal, and therefore the Mongols and Turks mercilessly took the lives of the criminals themselves and their relatives. The diplomatic service in the state of Genghis Khan was at the highest level and the attitude towards the ambassadors was distinguished by boundless respect. Throughout the territory controlled by the Mongols, the ambassadors were inviolable, they could move freely and safely. For example, in the middle of the XIII century, a Flemish Franciscan monk made a long journey to the Mongols on behalf of the French king Louis IX. About 7 years later, another European traveler, the Venetian merchant Marco Polo, traveled almost the same way through the Mongol possessions and returned safely, as did Guillaume de Rubrouck. These facts indicate that the peoples who became part of the Mongol state strictly observed all the precepts of Genghis Khan, collected in the Great Book of Yasa.

Ala Juveini is a Persian historian of the XIII century, author of the historical work *Ta'rih-i jahangushai* ("The History of the World-conqueror") this is how he describes security throughout the entire territory of the Mongol Empire: "He so restrained his entourage and subordinates with fear of Yasa and his reprisals for its violation that in his rule, whoever passed near his troops did not need either an advance guard or a convoy, and, figuratively speaking, if any woman put a tray of gold on her head and went alone, she would not be afraid of anything" [3] Al-Maqrizi, an Egyptian historian and geographer of the Mamluk period, gives an example of high hospitality also from the Great Book of Yasa, article 24. "If someone passes by people when they eat, he must get off his horse, eat with them without permission, and none of them should forbid him this" Fragments of the "Great Yasa" according to Al-Maqrizi [ 4 ]

The age-old traditions of hospitality of the nomadic peoples of Central Asia have been tested for strength and continue to exist in the modern world. The relatively low number of such peoples as the Kyrgyz, Kazakhs, Mongols, Kalmyks, etc., speak of high passionarity, a rich military past and difficult conditions of nomadic life. Such factors have led to an awareness of the value of every human life and a respectful attitude towards any person, be it just a wanderer or a specially invited person. The rules of hospitality, which existed in the form of oral instructions, acquired the status of a written law in Genghis Khan's "Great Book of Yasa" and became the collective unconscious of the former nomadic, and now settled Kyrgyz, Kazakhs, Mongols, etc.

An important attractive circumstance of wide hospitality was religious tolerance among the Turkic and Mongolian peoples, which later also took shape in the article of the written law of Genghis Khan in the Great Book of Yasa. Any traveler professing the religion of his ancestors could not fear for his life if he turned out to be a guest of a Tengrian nomad. There have never been senseless disputes about the truth of a particular faith, their correctness or incorrectness [ 5 ]. Of course, such tolerance to other religions was an extremely attractive feature for many peoples who were conquered by the Turks, and later by the Mongols. However, the passage of time inexorably led to the fact that Islam began to penetrate and occupy a strong position in Central Asia, displacing Tengrianism.

The process of globalization has captured everyone and everything and, without making a

distinction in culture and mentality, has begun the process of eroding and devaluing the tradition of broad hospitality. The “Westernization”, liberalization and individualization of the thinking of the population of the peoples in the countries of Central Asia is happening so rapidly that within one generation of people one can see enormous differences. The pandemic, which once divided collectivist societies, has also made its destructive adjustments. In addition, the process of urbanization and population migration are eroding tribal ties, turning people into marginals. “The population of Kyrgyzstan in 1926-1989 increased 4 times – from 1001.7 thousand to 4290.5 thousand people. At the same time, the share of the urban population has tripled – from 12.2% to 38.2%” [ 6 ]

Individualization of thinking or the so-called “atomized” person led to the loss of social ties, the loss of skills of collective problem solving and collective interaction

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