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## Civilizational Rise and Development: A Study of the Emergence and Rise of the Turks

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### Civilizational Rise and Development: A Study of the Emergence and Rise of the Turks

**Abstract.** The work delves into the fascinating origin and history of the Turks, tracing the evolution of civilizations from nomadic societies to established civilizations. This transformation is an important aspect of human history reflecting the shift from a nomadic way of life to settled societies. The primary focus of this journey is on The Xiang nu who transitioned from a stateless existence to a powerful macro\_ polity and are considered the forbearers of the Turks. This transition from statelessness to establishing a macro polity is here the intricate and nuanced narrative of the Turks' beginning to take shape. The Xiang nu served as a crucial bridge for them, it not only laid the groundwork for the Turkic civilization but also contributed significantly to the broader narrative of Eurasian history. The work then delves into the subsequent division of the Turks into two distinct branches. It briefly touches on the political structure of the Turks, illuminating how they governed themselves with the primary focus on the function of their head "Khan or Khagan".

**Keywords:** Turks, Khans, Civilization, Ottomans

## INTRODUCTION

Many early civilizations evolved from nomadic or semi-nomadic societies. This transition is supported by historical and archaeological evidence. Archaeological findings indicate that early humans were nomadic hunter-gatherers before they transitioned to settled agricultural communities. The remains of ancient settlements and tools provide insights into this transition. The shift from nomadism to settled life was closely tied to the agricultural revolution where people began to cultivate crops and domesticated animals. This allowed for a more stable and sustainable food supply, which led to the growth of settlements. The establishment of permanent settlements often near fertile river valleys facilitated the growth of early civilizations. Many civilizations that developed from settled agricultural communities went on to build empires, which further consolidated their power and expanded their influence.

One of the well-documented examples of a civilization whose archaeological findings indicate a transition from a nomadic lifestyle to a settled civilization is the Sumerians of ancient Mesopotamia. They are often considered one of the world's earliest civilizations, dating back to around 4500 BC in the region of southern Mesopotamia which is now modern-day Iraq. Early suzerain's sites Such as "etude and urus" have yielded artefacts indicating a nomadic lifestyle. These include tools for hunting, fishing, and gathering.<sup>1</sup>

The same was the case with other great civilizations like;

- i. Achaemenid civilization.
- ii. Mongols
- iii. Turks and many more.

However, it is challenging to trace the authentic origin of civilizations with nomadic origin, because they do not leave behind fixed and long-lasting architectural structures. They often dwell in portable or temporary shelters like tents which tend to leave minimal physical traces in the archaeological record. Their lifestyles are characterized by mobility. Nomads move with their livestock, leaving behind minimal permanent traces of their presence in one location. The ephemeral nature of their camps makes it difficult to locate and study archaeological sites. Many nomadic societies rely on oral traditions rather than written records which means that their history and culture are often passed down through storytelling which is subject to alteration and loss over time so their interaction with settled civilizations leads to cultural exchanges and makes it challenging to distinguish between indigenous nomadic practices and those influenced by neighbouring settled cultures. As the paper is about the origin and history of Turks so we will begin with their origin.

The Turks, a diverse collective group characterized by unique languages and shared cultural and historical elements, have experienced significant transformations

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<sup>1</sup> Kramer, S. N. *The Sumerians: Their History, Culture, and Character*. University of Chicago Press 1963 pp. 10-12.

in their civilizational allegiances over time. Throughout various eras, they have often been perceived by outsiders as lacking in civilization, a view likely influenced by their traditionally nomadic way of life. As they journeyed across the Eurasian landscape and eventually settled in the Altai Mountains, the Turks navigated through different civilizations. Despite these migrations, they retained a distinct identity. Moreover, they demonstrated an enduring commitment to specific civilizations, contributing significantly to their development and progress.<sup>2</sup>

In the earliest chapters of their history, the Turks were nomadic people. Their ancestral lands lay in Central Asia, stretching across the expansive green plains north of Afghanistan, beyond the Himalayas, and into China. This region, predominantly covered in steppe grass, was ideally suited for rearing animals, which was the primary occupation of the Turks. As herdsmen, they had to continually migrate to new grazing grounds to sustain the livestock they relied on. This lifestyle dictated their social structure: while large groups risked exhausting the pastures, smaller ones couldn't adequately defend themselves. Consequently, the earliest form of Turkish social organization was tribal, with the size and strength of each tribe fluctuating based on its surrounding resources and the effectiveness of its leaders.<sup>3</sup>

The unification of Turkish tribes under the leadership of influential chiefs, known as Hans or khans, marked their emergence as formidable conquerors. This consolidation is first documented in the 8th-century Orhan inscriptions,<sup>4</sup> which celebrate the reign of a Han. However, Chinese chronicles trace back the existence of Turkish confederations to the 4th century BCE. These early Turks were skilled in ironworking and agriculture, including some horticultural practices. They lived in tents, predominantly engaged in animal husbandry, and were organized into clans and tribes. A distinctive cultural aspect was their shamanistic religious practices. Notably, even as Turkic peoples diversified over time, their folk literature, passed down orally, maintained striking similarities across different groups.

The Turkic people are well-known for establishing or being a part of large empires. However, many Turks who lived as nomadic herders preferred not to have a centralized government or state. They often resisted being controlled by a government, which is a common trait among nomadic groups. In their day-to-day tribal life, the leader (khan) and senior members of the family or tribe would decide on important matters. These included where to move to graze their animals, where and whom to marry, how to settle disputes, and whether to defend against or attack outsiders. There are perhaps 135 million Turkic people in the world today, with only about 40 percent of them living in Turkey. The rest are scattered across Central Asia, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and northern and western China, making them one of the most widely scattered races in the world. All these people descended from a small tribe of horseman that originated in the Altai region

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<sup>2</sup> Findley, Carter V. *The Turks in World History*. Oxford University Press, 2005 p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Czaplicka, M. A. *The Turks of Central Asia in History and at the Present Day: An Ethnological Inquiry into the Pan-Turanian Problem, and Bibliographical Material Relating to the Early Turks and the Present Turks of Central Asia*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1918 p. 87

<sup>4</sup> Ross, E. Denison. *The Orkhon Inscriptions: Being a Translation of Professor Vilhelm Thomsen's Final Danish Rendering*. 1930.p. 33

The Altai Region is a mountainous zone located in Central Asia at the junction of Mongolia, Russia, Kazakhstan, and China. Positioned between the Gobi Desert and the Siberian Plain, this region is considered the original homeland of various ethnic groups including Mongolians, Turks, Koreans, and Hungarians. The Ural-Altai languages are named after this area. Ancient rock carvings in this region are thought to have been created by the ancestors of the Altay people.

The Altai Mountains extend for about 1,200 miles from Siberia in the north to the Gobi Desert in the south, crossing south-western Mongolia. These mountains are not very high, with several peaks rising above 4,500 meters. The Altai people primarily inhabit the wide plateaus, steppes, and valleys within the mountain ranges where water is abundant. The Altai mountain system includes several ranges, notably the South Altai, Inner Altai, and East Altai, which collectively form a significant watershed for the whole of Asia.

### Origin of Turks

The exact origins of the Turkic peoples remain largely uncharted. Before becoming a notable presence in Eurasian history, and before their mention in recorded history, the Turks or their ancestors already played a significant role. It's believed by linguists that the now-extinct proto-Turkic language was in use around 3000–500 B.C.E. However, it wasn't until the 6th century C.E. that they made a definitive appearance in history. At this time, Chinese historical texts refer to a group in Mongolia and southern Siberia known as the Tujue (T'u-chue), who are now recognized as the Turks. Earlier, around the third century B.C.E., peoples with similar characteristics were noted in history. Among these were the Xiongnu (Hsiung-nu), known from Chinese records. The Xiongnu are often, though not unanimously, considered to be forerunners of the Turkic and Mongol peoples.

### The Xiongnu

The significance of the Xiongnu lies in their establishment of the inaugural empire across the steppes, setting a precedent for the transition from the micro political nature of scattered tribal communities to the macro political structure of an empire. This transition became a template for the Turko-Mongol successors. From the late fourth century B.C.E., Chinese historical writings increasingly focused on the nomadic tribes of Inner Asia at their northwestern frontier.

In reaction to China's encroachment into their lands, the Xiongnu formed the earliest empire in Inner Asia. Comprising various tribal groups, the Xiongnu confederation was likely diverse in ethnicity, united more by political affiliations than by a common lineage. The evolution of the Xiongnu from a stateless society to an empire is often examined through the lenses of crisis, militarization, and centralization.<sup>5</sup>

#### 1. Crises

Academic debates often highlight that various crises have historically been catalysts in the establishment of nomadic empires. These crises could be internal,

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<sup>5</sup> Findley, Carter V. *The Turks in World History*, Oxford University Press, 2005 p. 29.

such as droughts endangering the livelihood and survival of the populace and livestock, or conflicts within tribes. They could also be external, exemplified by invasions from foreign powers into the steppes. The formation of the Xiongnu Empire, for instance, was triggered by an external event. The first emperor of the recently united China dispatched General Meng Tian with a substantial army to seize control of 'the territory south of the Yellow River,' followed by the construction of walls and fortified settlements to secure these new territories. This marked China's first significant expansion into nomadic lands. The strategic importance of this incursion becomes apparent considering the Yellow River's broad northern bend, which encompasses the Ordos region. This area, a mix of ecological zones, had been vital for the Xiongnu, offering prime grazing grounds and serving as a strategic point for launching attacks into China".<sup>6</sup>

### 2. Militarization

The militarization phase, a pivotal step in the establishment of an empire, emerged roughly a decade later under the leadership of Modun, the charismatic founder of the Xiongnu Empire. As the eldest son of a Xiongnu chieftain, known as a chanyu, Modun achieved a critical milestone in state formation on the steppes by transforming his followers into a disciplined group. His ability to command their loyalty and obedience, which took precedence over their tribal allegiances, was crucial. Without such unification, the inherent military capabilities of tribal societies would remain either disorganized or unfocused, as depicted by the historian Sima Qian.

The little boys start by learning to ride sheep and shoot birds and rats with a bow and arrow, and when they get a little older, they shoot foxes and hares, which are used for food. Thus, all the young men can use a bow and act as armed cavalry in the time of war. It is their custom to herd their flocks in times of peace and make their living by hunting, but in periods of crisis, they take up arms and go off on plundering and marauding expeditions. This seems to be their inborn nature. For long-range weapons, they use bows and arrows, and swords and spears at close range. If the battle is going well for them, they will advance, but if not, they will retreat, for they do not consider it a disgrace to run away.<sup>7</sup>

After securing control over his troops and consolidating power, Modun set out on a path of expansion. Before long, "the Xiongnu had grown to their most formidable extent and power, dominating all other northern barbarian tribes and then positioning themselves as adversaries to China in the south". The initial stage in their evolution from a small-scale polity to a large-scale one was sparked by the crisis of the Chinese invasion. This led to the second stage, militarization, which would subsequently pave the way for the third stage: centralization.

### 3. Centralization

Centralization marked a dramatic transformation, shifting from a dispersed and comparatively equal structure to one that was centralized and hierarchical. This new

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<sup>6</sup> Grousset, R. *The Empire of the Steppes: A History of Central Asia*. Rutgers University Press. 1970 p. 57

<sup>7</sup> Findley, Carter V., *The Turks in World History*, Oxford University Press, 2005 p. 30

structure emphasized the distinctions between 'senior' and 'junior' clans, pooling authority at the top. The pivotal aspect of this change was the emergence of a leader with such influence that he could unite various tribal chiefs, who would then acknowledge his supreme authority through a sacred ceremony, affirming his divine right to rule. While not as absolute in power as a Chinese emperor, the 'chanyu' held command in warfare and managed diplomatic relations with China, yet he needed to seek counsel from his tribal chiefs on domestic matters.<sup>8</sup>

The supreme leader, referred to as "chanyu" by the Xiongnu and later as "khagan" by the Turks and Mongols, had to enhance his initial power base beyond his personal household and tribe to establish a more extensive supratribal framework. This expansion was essential for exerting centralized state authority, as it enabled him to dominate other tribes and offer sufficient advantages to maintain their allegiance.

As the Xiongnu gained strength through effective strategies, several agreements were established between them and China, including the notable Treaty of Heqin in 198 BCE. These agreements acknowledged a dual-world order, positioning both the Chinese emperor and the Xiongnu ruler as equals in status, with each commanding their respective tributary allies. Despite this official parity, China was actually in a more subordinate position compared to the Xiongnu, a unique situation as no other 'barbarian' leader had been accorded such equal standing with a Chinese emperor. In these arrangements, China was obliged to provide tribute. The zenith of Xiongnu dominance was during the rule of Emperor Han Wendi (179–57 BCE).

Over time, the Han Dynasty in China solidified its political control and bolstered its military capabilities. This enhancement included the development of regular cavalry, the initiation of horse breeding programs, the adoption of advanced weaponry like repeat-firing crossbows, and the expansion of its infrastructure with more forts, roads, and supply depots.

These advancements enabled the Chinese to not only reclaim border areas but also to incorporate them into their administrative framework. Moreover, they were capable of launching unexpected assaults deep into Xiongnu territory. Post 119 BCE, the Chinese ceased their tribute payments and shifted their focus from merely defeating the Xiongnu to annihilating them. By 110 BCE, the Xiongnu were driven past the Gobi Desert into the northern steppes and forest regions. This ushered in two decades of Han military campaigns extending westward, escalating the conflict into a full-scale war.<sup>9</sup>

In 60 B.C.E., however, a series of succession wars began. Now, the Chinese demanded recognition of Chinese suzerainty as the condition for further treaties. In 54 B.C.E., the "chanyu" of a group of southern Xiongnu tribes accepted this condition. In 51 B.C.E., he even attended the Han court to pay homage to the emperor in person. The Xiongnu slipped into dependency on China and tribal decentralization. By the second century C.E., one of their successor peoples, the Xianbi (Hsien-pi), had eclipsed them. The Xianbi were also the people who, around 265 C.E., adopted not

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 31

<sup>9</sup> Yu, Ying-Shih. Trade and Expansion in Han China: A Study in the Structure of Sino-Barbarian Economic Relations, University of California Press, 1986, pp. 38-39

the title chanyu but the title that later became most prestigious for a Turkic ruler, "khagan". Another Xiongnu successor state was the khaganate of the Rou ran. One of the Rou ran (also known as Juan Juan)'s subject tribes were the first to bear the name Turk as its tribal name.<sup>10</sup>

### Emergence of Turks

In 552 CE, the establishment of the first state known as Turk marked the beginning of the pre-Islamic era of Turkic state development, a period that extended into the tenth century. This era witnessed the rise and fall of the first and second Turk Empires (552–630 and 682–745 CE), followed by their successors: the Uyghurs in the east (744–840) and the Khazars in the west (630–965).<sup>11</sup> The historical narrative of this era is characterized by both enduring elements and significant transformations that shaped the course of Turkic history.<sup>12</sup>

During this period, as Turks emerged prominently in historical records, it's significant to explore their self-perception of origins, a journey that moves from historical records into the realm of mythology. Turkic and Mongol communities share a common mythological framework, featuring motifs of a Mountain, a Tree, a Cave, Water, and a Female Spirit. A well-known myth, recorded in Chinese texts, recounts the genesis of the sixth century Turk tribe the earliest group identified by this name from a she-wolf. This narrative is the precursor to numerous Turko-Mongol myths that weave together similar symbolic elements.

In this myth, the Turks who founded the first Turkish empire, the Turk kaghanate, on the Orkhon River in 552 C.E. were a separate tribe of the Xiongnu, bearing the family name A-shih-na or Ashina. Enemies defeated and destroyed all the Ashina, except for a ten-year-old boy, whose feet they cut off. A she-wolf saved him, feeding him meat. He grew up and mated with her. Learning that the boy was still alive, the neighbouring king again sent troops to destroy him. The she-wolf escaped to a mountain cave near Turfan in what is now Xinjiang province. Inside the cave was a large grassy plain surrounded by mountains. Hiding in those mountains, the wolf gave birth to ten boys, each of whom grew up, married a woman from outside, and had children. Each child took a family name, one of them taking the name A-shih-na. After several generations, they emerged from the cave and became subjects of the Rouran, working for them as ironsmiths.

In Turkic and Mongol mythology, the wolf is revered as a mythical progenitor. This creature is also commonly embodied by the protective spirit that leads a young shaman, and Turkic shamanistic beliefs often attribute to these shamans the ability to transform into wolves. Another perspective suggests that the wolf, representing the ancestral spirit of the ruling clan, held particular significance for the ruler's personal guard or entourage, known as 'bori,' meaning 'wolf'. These guards, likely composed of members from various tribes, were primarily devoted to the ruler. For

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<sup>10</sup> Findley, *op. cit.* p. 35

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37

them, the connection with the wolf spirit, symbolizing the ruler's mythical ancestor, might have held deeper significance than it did for the average tribesperson.

The name 'A-shih-na', which is not of Turkic linguistic origin, likely derives from an Iranian language of Central Asia and translates to "blue" or "kok" in Turkic. This color is associated with the East, hence the term "Kok Turk," another designation for the Turk Empire, essentially means "Eastern Turks." Chinese historical accounts date the origins of the Turks back to 439 C.E., when around 500 families, all sharing the A-shih-na surname, resided within the Rouran state as ironworkers. Following the collapse of the Rouran state, partially influenced by their actions, they rose to power in 552. At this juncture, the term "Turk" transitioned from a mere tribal identifier to a political term, eventually being used to describe various groups beyond the original Turk tribe. Within ten years, the Turk Empire expanded its influence significantly westward. Its founders, Bumn and Istemi, became leaders of the eastern and western regions, respectively, initially forming short-lived alliances with Iran's Sassanians and then with the Byzantines.<sup>13</sup>

### **Rise of Turks**

The emergence of the Turk Empire occurred simultaneously with the consolidation of China, initially under the Sui Dynasty (581–618) and more enduringly during the Tang Dynasty (618–907). While the short-lived Sui Dynasty exploited succession disputes within the Turk Empire to their advantage, it was the Tang Dynasty that significantly shaped the interactions between China and the Turk. The Tang, with ancestral ties to North China – a region long dominated by foreign powers and deeply influenced by steppe cultures – had a profound influence on the dynamics of China-Turk relations.<sup>14</sup>

The second emperor of the Tang Dynasty, Taizong (626–649), embodied the characteristics of a Chinese kaghan. An accomplished horseman and warrior, he was dynamic enough to seize power by overthrowing his father and eliminating his brothers. In dealing with the eastern Turk kaghan, Taizong demonstrated versatility in his tactics: he was prepared to personally lead military campaigns against him, engage in negotiations, or even propose one-on-one combat. Additionally, Taizong participated in fraternity rituals and horse sacrifices alongside him. On a strategic level, he skilfully fostered relations with the western Turks while simultaneously instigating divisions between them and the eastern Turks.

Over time, the Tang Dynasty managed to subdue the eastern kaghan, making the Turk subservient to the Tang's "heavenly kaghans" for fifty years (629–679). Leveraging the Turk forces, the Tang established a vast buffer zone encompassing Manchuria, Mongolia, and East Turkistan, and even subdued the western Turk Empire in 659. The Western Turks, with their primary base in the Issyk-Kul region, had more significant interactions with Persia than with China. It was from the collective tribes or states under the rule of the Turgis and Karluk - descendants of the

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 40

<sup>14</sup> Beckwith, Christopher I. *Empires of the Silk Road: A History of Central Eurasia from the Bronze Age to the Present*. Princeton University Press, 2009. pp. 42-43

Asena family in the West - that various groups and dynasties emerged. These included the Khazars, Uzes, and Pechenegs, and even influenced dynasties as far as the Tulunids and Ikhshidids in Egypt, and the Ghaznavids, Ghurids, and Seljuks in Persia and Turkistan. Ultimately, following the Mongol conquest, this lineage led to the rise of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>15</sup>

### Polity

The Turk Empire held significant political influence. Originating as a tribal confederation, it was structured into various tiers: at its center were the "inner tribes," comprising the dominant clan and its allied tribes, including those related by marriage. The second layer consisted of autonomously allied tribes, which retained their leadership. The third layer included tribes that were coerced into joining, often with their leaders supplanted by imperial administrators. Additionally, there were sedentary communities that paid tributes to the empire. This hierarchical system of the Turk Empire, with its foundations traced back to the Xiongnu, laid down the governance blueprint for Turkic states for many following centuries.<sup>16</sup>

#### a. The khan or khagan

At the pinnacle of the hierarchy was the khagan, the supreme ruler. Essential to the khagan's authority was the control of Mount Otuken, where they were required to conduct rites at its sacred locations. This practice, established among the Turk and possibly originating with the Xiongnu, involved the use of specific standards, such as a designated number of horse or yak tails, often accompanied by flags and drums. These symbols, representing rulership or official status, were revered with offerings of kumis, a type of fermented mare's milk, before engaging in battle.

During the inauguration ceremony of the kaghan, he would initially be enfolded in a felt rug and spun around nine times. Following this, he was required to mount a horse and ride it, after which he would be nearly suffocated with a silk scarf. At the moment when he was close to losing consciousness, he would be prompted to declare the number of years he intended to reign. The Arab geographer Al-Istakhri noted that this tradition persisted in the Khazar state, a successor to the Turk. According to his observations, a kaghan would be put to death once the declared duration of his rule had elapsed.

The position of the kaghan was reserved for members of the Ashina clan, while his principal wife, the Khatun, was required to be from the Ashete clan. Together, they were regarded as the sovereign pair. The kaghan's role extended beyond mere symbolism; he was integral in maintaining the empire's cohesion, compelling enemies to submit a tribute. Renowned for his prowess in both celebratory feasting and combat, the kaghan was also responsible for the well-being of his followers and the populace. This involved distributing war spoils and reallocating tribute to ensure they were adequately fed and clothed. The effectiveness of the kaghan's leadership was

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<sup>15</sup> Harper Parker Edward, *The Origin of the Turks*, Longmans Green and Co., 1896, p. 441

<sup>16</sup> Golden, P. B. *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples: Ethno genesis and State-Formation in Medieval and Early Modern Eurasia and the Middle East*. Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden 1992, pp. 3-4

thus heavily reliant on his skill in gathering and redistributing resources, either through tribute or commercial means.<sup>17</sup>

b. The Imperial Governors

Below the kaghan in the power structure came the imperial governors (all from the Ashina clan) over the tribes.

c. The Tribal Leaders

The native tribal chiefs, known as 'begs', played a significant role in the governance structure. Chinese historical records indicate that the system included twenty-eight distinct ranks, each inherited. The political landscape was diverse during this period, with no single governing model dominating among the Turkic peoples. Many continued to live in tribal societies without formal state structures. Additionally, Turk governance incorporated numerous non-Turkic elements. For instance, several key terms used in their political lexicon were borrowed from other languages. The title 'khatun', referring to the ruler's wife, and 'beg', meaning 'aristocrat', were derived from the Sogdian language and have since been used in Turkish.

The state formation model of the Turk persisted, to a large extent, through the Mongol era. However, the political landscape during this period was marked by diversity. Not all Turkic groups adopted a singular model; many continued to exist in tribal societies without formal states. Turk statecraft was also influenced by non-Turkic elements. For instance, key political terms were often borrowed from other languages. The title 'khatun', used for the ruler's wife, and 'beg', denoting an 'aristocrat', both originated from the Sogdian language and have been commonly used in Turkish ever since. This adoption wasn't limited to terminology; practices were also assimilated. Sogdian merchants, known to purchase slaves (chakar) and establish guards or private armies for protection during travels, possibly inspired the concept of military recruitment from slave ranks in subsequent Islamic and Turkic societies.

## Society of Turks

Turk society was hierarchical, with a clear division between the elite, including the ruling clan and other noble families known as 'begs', and the common people, referred to as 'kara bodun'. Despite this stratification, there was a unifying military aspect. Every male was considered an 'er', meaning both 'man' and 'warrior' by implication. Young men were expected to earn their 'warrior name' (er ati) through bravery in battle or hunting. The elite men held the title of 'er bashi', signifying their role as commanders of a certain number of men. Women primarily handled productive labor, while men were preoccupied with their weapons and animals. This gender dynamic influenced war captivities, resulting in mostly female and sometimes young male captives, but rarely adult males. The necessity for mobility and endurance in harsh climates shaped preferences for rich fabrics, furs, and ornate belts equipped to carry essential items. The productive capabilities and technological advancements of such societies were significant, even in ancient times. The expertise needed to forge steel swords in charcoal fires was seen as almost magical, akin to the craftsmanship

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<sup>17</sup> Findley, op. cit. p. 44

of bow makers who spent considerable time and skill to create composite bows. These bows notably surpassed the range of European longbows by considerable margins.<sup>18</sup> The society of primitive Turks, before the rise of large empires and states, was characterized by nomadic pastoralism and tribal organization. Here are some key features of early Turkic society:

1. **Nomadic Lifestyle:** Primitive Turkic society was predominantly nomadic, with various Turkic tribes and clans moving across the vast steppes of Central Asia in search of pastureland for their herds of livestock, primarily horses, sheep, and cattle. This nomadic lifestyle was essential for their survival in these harsh and arid regions.
2. **Tribal Structure:** Early Turks were organized into tribal groups, and these tribes had their leaders or chieftains. These tribes were often loosely affiliated under the broader Turkic identity but retained a degree of autonomy.
3. **Kinship and Clan Systems:** Social organization was based on strong kinship ties and clan structures. Clans played a vital role in decision-making, resource distribution, and maintaining social order within Turkic society.
4. **Pastoral Economy:** Turkic people relied on animal husbandry as their primary source of sustenance and livelihood. They herded and raised livestock, which provided them with food, clothing, and transportation.
5. **Oral Tradition:** Early Turkic societies had rich oral traditions, including epic poetry and storytelling, as a means of passing down their history, values, and cultural.<sup>19</sup> heritage from one generation to the next.
6. **Shamanism: and Ancestral Worship:** Traditional Turkic spirituality often revolved around shamanistic practices and animistic beliefs. Ancestor worship was also a significant part of their religious and spiritual life.
7. **Migration and Trade:** Turkic tribes engaged in seasonal migrations in search of better pastures, which sometimes led to interactions with neighbouring cultures. They also participated in trade along the Silk Road, exchanging goods and ideas with various other groups.
8. **Warrior Culture:** The Turks developed a warrior culture, and horseback riding and archery skills were highly valued. These skills not only aided in hunting and defense but also played a role in the rise of Turkic military prowess.

## CONCLUSION

The early Turkic society was not a single, monolithic entity but a diverse collection of tribes and clans. Over time, some of these Turkic tribes would coalesce into larger political entities, like the GokTurk Khaganate, which marked the beginning of Turkic empires. As these empires expanded, they played a crucial role in shaping the history and culture of the Turkic people. The Turks, a diverse collective group characterized by unique languages and shared cultural and historical elements, have experienced significant transformations in their civilizational allegiances over time. Throughout various eras, they have often been perceived by outsiders as lacking

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 45

<sup>19</sup> Golden, op. cit., pp. 4-5

in civilization, a view likely influenced by their traditionally nomadic way of life. As they journeyed across the Eurasian landscape and eventually settled in the Altai Mountains, the Turks navigated through different civilizations. Despite these migrations, they retained a distinct identity. Moreover, they demonstrated an enduring commitment to specific civilizations, contributing significantly to their development and progress.

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