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THE CONSTRUCTION OF ETHNICITY IN MEDIEVAL TURKIC EURASIA

Ethnicity is a much-discussed subject and social scientists and historians have had a lot to say about it. Basically, their definitions usually derive from the European experience of nation building. Ethnic groups, we are told, should have a common name, a myth of common origins, shared historical memories (with appropriate holidays), a common culture (language, customs, religion), a common territory/homeland or at least a memory of a common homeland (often in dispute with their neighbors) and finally some sense of solidarity. In the earlier notions of modern nation building, these ties were seen as biological, i.e. all members of the group were believed to have descended from a common ancestor. This is the so-called “**Primordialist**” viewpoint, one that on occasion degenerated into overheated nationalism and racism. These ideas were woven into the national narratives of the nation-states as they took shape in 19th and 20th century Europe— and elsewhere. In time, historians and social scientists saw that there was a lot of political negotiation that went into both nation building in modern times and ethnogenesis in earlier times. Nations were conceived of as “imagined communities.” They did not arise naturally from a pristine ethnic base but were “constructed” usually by indigenous groups of intellectuals with political goals or by governments, often both. In a good many instances, people had to be taught who they were in national systems of education. Obviously, this could only occur with the advent of mass education and mass communications. It is a relatively recent phenomenon. We need not enter into the battles between the “Primordialists,” “Constructionists” and those deconstructing them except to note that increasingly they are now looking for common ground. Some nations do, indeed, have “deep roots,” but political manipulation in the shaping of

their modern (and earlier) identities cannot be excluded. DNA studies are increasing the data available to us, but still require further refinements with respect to defining ethnicities.

We have lots of problems in applying these approaches with regard to the Eurasian steppe world. Organized in tribes and tribal-like structures (terms that are subject to much debate among social scientists) – and only very exceptionally in states, our nomads are hard to pin down. They easily moved from chiefdoms, complex chiefdoms to early states, xenocracies in which they controlled imperial-like structures and then back again. They lived dispersed over extensive territories, requiring periodic migrations to fresh pastures. Those on the frontiers of powerful states/empires, in particular, had flexible political and ethnic loyalties. Indeed, tribes often form on the peripheries of empires and are sometimes molded by those empires to suit their purposes. Sometimes, tribal groupings, often brought together in confederacies by or in reaction to states, adopt a common name, based on that of the politically dominant group and recalibrate their ethnogenic myths to suit the origin myth of the politically leading tribe: this is the “kernels of tradition” model. Some would argue that these were not peoples, but “armies on the move” with fragile political loyalties and malleable notions of ethnic affinity. When tribal unions break up, older traditions and names resurface until the next union is formed, often with the same components – more or less, but now under a new name. We can observe this kaleidoscopic jumble across the frontier zone from the Roman world to China. Tribal society was fluid. Political and ethnic loyalties may have had little hold on the rank and file. Sorting out who is who is not easy.

During the 1st millennium CE, according to one recent calculation, Chinese sources recorded some 59 distinct “peoples” in Central Eurasia but provide information on what language they spoke only for 18 – and of the 18 only 3 can be identified with any degree of

certainty. Archaeological finds, in the absence of written documents found in situ, are often not helpful as ethno-linguistically distinct groupings can share a common archaeological culture (e.g. the Alanic and Bulgharic populations of the Saltovo-Mayatskaya culture in Khazaria). As for shared historical memories? Presumably, the “barbarians,” as their sedentary neighbors invariably called them, had them, but these were rarely written down. Some were preserved orally – and hence subject to change. We have little that comes directly from the “barbarians” that was written down. Much of what we know comes from their sedentary imperial neighbors who disliked, feared and oftentimes simply misunderstood them – and sought to control them or buffer their borders against them. Where possible, they tried to shape the “barbarians” into groups that made sense to them and could further imperial purposes. This is an old game and empires have been doing it for millennia in their tribal borderlands. The modern states of post-Soviet Central Eurasia (e.g. Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan) are all the products of imperial manipulations by Tsarist Russia and especially the former Soviet Union. How does this work out with the steppe peoples of Medieval Eurasia?

First of all, what really bound the medieval nomadic steppe peoples was not a common name, origin myth or language - although we can see elements of that peeking through the fog and many spoke variants of a common tongue - Turkic. Rather, it was *habitus* shaped by a shared culture of pastoral nomadism and variants of a high political culture: the Steppe Imperial Tradition. They constructed a “reality” of descent from a common ancestor and expressed their political ties in biological terms. Genealogies were manipulated. This was in a sense a “guided” – even “imagined” Primordialism. This official image was in accord with ancient and medieval notions of nationhood prevalent among their sedentary neighbors. In reality, these “nations” or “peoples” were polyglot conglomerations that had joined a charismatic (successful) leading

clan/tribe and adopted its ideology, political traditions and name - voluntarily or by force. Ethnicity in this fluid population was a highly politicized process and the peoples concerned were not the only actors on the stage. Ethnic identifications could also be shaped by one's neighbors - on several levels: 1) alterity - the basic "we" and "you" juxtaposition. One's response to the question "who are you?" often depended on who was doing the asking - and why - producing also "situational ethnicity." 2) the political goals of neighboring empires which regularly meddled in affairs in the "tribal zone." As for memories of a common homeland, these are hard to come by in such a mobile society with multiple, shifting homelands - although the holy grounds around the Orkhon and Selenge rivers in Mongolia, political and spiritual centers for a series of states into the Chinggisid era, retained some hold. Moreover, such "memories" were largely recorded by second or third parties.

The ancient Turkic *Urheimat* appears to have been located in Southern Siberia from the Lake Baikal region to Eastern Mongolia - although arguments have been advanced placing it well to the west of that area. *Urheimat*-seeking is now quite unfashionable in some scholarly circles. What we really mean here is that at a certain time and place, a grouping of people, very likely of diverse origins, but now speaking a more or less common language, lived for a fairly extended period as a linguistic-cultural community. The "Proto-Turks" in their Southern Siberian-Mongolian "homeland," were in contact with speakers of Eastern Iranian (Scytho-Sakas, who were also in Mongolia), Uralic and Palaeo-Siberian languages. Turkic is traditionally reckoned to be a member of the Altaic language "family." The latter is said to include Mongolic (in various forms historically and today - and also including "Para-Mongolic" or "Serbi-Mongolic" i.e. a grouping of cognate languages ultimately stemming from an earlier common linguistic ancestor but diverging from Mongolic), Manchu-Tungusic and perhaps more distantly

Korean and Japanese. With the exception of Turkic, all the other members of this “family” had their ancient habitats in Manchuria with the Turkic-speakers immediately to their west. The “genetic” view of Altaic (i.e. derived from a common ancestor) has long been under assault and many scholars now view the shared elements of vocabulary, phonology and some grammatical forms as the result of centuries of borrowing and interaction. Some linguists have concluded that there is no Altaic family at all, neither genetic nor melded, but simply a group of distinct languages that have borrowed from each other over the centuries. The academic wrangling is far from over and these language questions are far from academic. Of late, the more neutral term Transeurasian is being used instead of Altaic – with an even wider range of languages. Language, as we noted, is one of the key markers of ethnicity in modern times – although it was not necessarily as central to ethnic identification in earlier times.

Let us move the speakers of Turkic or “Proto-Turkic” out of the Siberian forests, literally and figuratively. You may have noticed that I am cautiously using terms such as “Turkic,” “speakers of Turkic” etc. This is because we are talking about the 3rd -2nd millennia BCE and a people calling itself Türk does not make an official appearance until the mid-sixth century CE. There were four stages in the shaping of the Turkic peoples of today. The first three were the results of the rise and fall of steppe-based empires (or xenocracies) and the migrations touched off by each of these events in the Middle Ages. The last stage is much more recent, the 20th century, and is associated with the social/ethnic engineering of modern states. The earliest information we have on Turkic peoples is connected with the *Xiongnu*, a powerful nomadic empire centered in Mongolia that arose about 200 BCE, worried China for a while and then collapsed by the mid-2nd century CE. Xiongnu ethnolinguistic

affinities remain a mystery. What we do know is that they extended their rule over a number of tribal groupings that in later periods are clearly Turkic-speaking – and presumably were earlier. Chinese 匈奴 Xiongnu, probably reflecting in Old Chinese, a name something like **hoŋ-nâ*, is the source of the name *Hun*. The Huns who later appeared on the Volga River, ca. 350 CE have some relationship to the Xiongnu/Huns of the Chinese borderlands, or peoples that were politically under their control. The appearance of nomads with one or another form of this name in Iranian, Armenian, Syriac, Indian and Graeco-Roman sources, buttressed by some recent archaeological finds and now some DNA data, make a reasonable, but still circumstantial case for this connection – hotly debated for the last 50 years. The name game is particularly tricky. The Byzantines, in time, labeled almost every grouping in the Western Eurasian steppe “Hun” (or “Scythian”).

The Xiongnu broke up in stages and each crisis propelled peoples, including Turkic-speakers, westward. More recently it has been argued that there was only one migration of “Xiongnu” peoples westward in the mid-fourth century CE. The European Hunnic state, forming after 375, was an ethnolinguistic hodgepodge and the language of its Hun elite also remains a puzzle. About a decade after Attila’s demise, in 453, a number of peoples whom we can with certainty identify as Turkic-speaking come into the South-Russian-Ukrainian steppes. These were the Oghur peoples, who spoke an archaic form of Turkic (West Old Turkic) quite distinct from what we call Common Turkic (deriving from East Old Turkic). Among the Oghurs were a people called the Bulgars, some of whom later (late 7th century) came into the Balkans and established their rule over a number of Slavic tribes there. Later, they Slavicized, Christianized and formed one of the elements that produced the Bulgarian people of today. Others migrated to the Middle Volga, became Muslims in the early 10th century, mixed with other Turkic peoples

and local Finno-Ugric groupings, underwent a linguistic shift from Oghuric to Qipchaq/Common Turkic in the 14th century and are the Volga Tatars of today. Yet, others, in the neighboring area, remained pagan until relatively recently, preserved their original language, now mixed with local Volga Finnic, and are the modern Chuvash, the only living linguistic descendants of Oghuric (West Old Turkic).

The Türk tradition, preserved in the early 8th century Orkhon inscriptions, tells us nothing about Türk origins except that after creation of the earth and humankind, Bumïn and Ishtemi (or Istemi) became Qaghans over humankind and organized the Türk nation. The 7th century Chinese dynastic annals (the *Zhou-shu* [636], *Sui-shu* [656] and *Bei-shi* [659]), all accounts completed shortly after fall of the First Türk Empire (552-630 in the East, 659 in the West) report a number of ethnogonic tales about the 突厥 *Tūjué* (Early Middle Chinese *dwat k^huat = Türküt [Türüküt] or Turkit*) mediated by the Soghdians. These tales were gotten from the Türks themselves or the Soghdians who often served as their intermediaries with China. In these accounts, the Türks - and it must be emphasized here that they are only referring to the Türk people themselves, not other Turkic groupings, were an “independent branch” of the Xiongnu which had earlier lived around the “West Sea” (undefined, but probably in East Turkistan, Mongolia or Gansu). They were completely destroyed by a neighboring state. One boy, badly mutilated, was thrown into a swamp and survived thanks to the tender ministrations of a she-wolf (a common figure in Eurasian ethnogonic tales extending as far west as Rome). Later, the lad impregnated the she-wolf. When his enemies discovered that he was still alive and sought to kill him, the she-wolf fled north to a mountain in Eastern Turkistan. There, in a cave, she gave birth to ten sons, one of whom took the surname Ashina. He became their leader and placed a wolf’s head on his standard to show his maternal origins. Their numbers grew through marriage with

local women and several generations later they left the cave and acknowledged the overlordship of the Rouran/ Asian Avars, whom they served as iron workers. By this time, they were living on the slopes of the Altay. Rouran origins are often claimed to be “Mongolic” – and there is some evidence pointing in this direction. Another account, also in the Zhou-shu, places their home country, *Suo/Suǒ* 索 (Middle Chinese: *sak* = Saka?) north of the Xiongnu. Here, in a large family of 17 (or 70) brothers, only one of them, born of a wolf, proved capable of leadership. His oldest son, later given the name Türk, was made the leader. Türk’s son, Ashina (阿史那 EMC*ʔa ši’ na’, LMC ʔaʃɻ’ na’ < Khotano-Saka *âşşeiṇa-âşşena*), born of a concubine, was elected leader after his father’s death when he won a jumping contest. His grandson was Bumīn, the first Türk Qaghan, who is an actual historical figure. These are very different accounts but both feature descent from a totemic female ancestor: a she-wolf. Ashina is the family name of the clan that is the leader of the Türks. A Xiongnu association is noted. These conflicting tales probably point to mixed ethnolinguistic origins.

The *Sui-shu* offers us a less fanciful historical account. In it the Türks are said to stem from “mixed *Hu* barbarians” bearing the clan name Ashina, from the Gansu region. We don’t know when the Ashina-Türk first appeared in the Chinese borderlands, perhaps it was after 265 CE, a period of mass migrations of the Xiongnu and other tribes from Southern Siberia and adjoining regions. In the course of frontier turbulence, in 439, the Ashina with some 500 families shifted to Xinjiang and by 460 had moved to the Southern Altay and submitted to the Rouran/Asian Avar, the dominant power in Mongolia. Here, we are told, they settled and were engaged in iron working etc.

The Türk-Ashina relationship is not entirely clear. Were the Ashina merely a clan of the Türks? Were they a “foreign” clan that became leaders? We don’t know. The name

Ashina is not Turkic. It probably stems from East Iranian, perhaps Khotanese-Saka *âššeina/âššena* “blue.” In the Orkhon inscriptions (Kül Tegin, E,3/Bilge Qaghan, E, 4) mention is made of the *Kök Türk* “Blue Türks” and *Kök*, it may be inferred, is probably a translation of Ashina. Other explanations have been offered: Ashina represents a Tokharian-based term **Aršilaš* “noble kings” or is connected with Tokharian *arši* “holy man” (cf. Sanskrit *ṛṣi*). The Chinese term *Hu*, earlier used to denote “nomads,” by this time usually meant Iranians (especially Soghdians). The reference to “mixed Hu barbarians” probably means that the Ashina were some mix of Iranians and Turkic-speaking groups – perhaps with some Tokharians thrown in for good measure. The connection with the areas of East Turkistan and Gansu, regions with East Iranian and Tokharian populations, is important. The metallurgical skills of the Türk-Ashina were probably not acquired in the steppe. Indeed, the Turkic word for “iron” (*temür*) appears to be an ancient borrowing from Chinese.

The Chinese sources also tell us that the word *Türk* meant “helmet.” In the Turkic languages *Türk* has various meanings, but not this. Khotanese Saka (cf. *tturakä* meaning “lid”) has been tentatively suggested, but this is by no means certain as the Türks appear in Khotanese Saka documents as *Ttūrka* or *Ttrūka*. There are a good number of Iranian and Tokharian loanwords in Old Turkic. We might add here, that virtually all of the early Türk rulers have non-Turkic names and bore title that were not of Turkic origin. Thus, from the time of their entry onto the stage of history, the people who bore the name *Türk* appear to represent an ethnically complex amalgam. The first official written monument we have from them (Bugut Inscription, 582), naturally, was written in Soghdian – the lingua franca of the Silk Road, with fragments of an inscription in Old Mongol (Rouran/Avar) written in the Brāhmī script.

By the 540s, the Ashina-Türks were in direct contact with Northern China, ruled

now by competing dynasties, the Eastern and Western Wei (themselves of foreign Xianbei/Serbi, Para-Mongolic origin), each looking for allies in their tribal periphery. The Rouran/Asian Avar Qaghan, Anagui (520-552), the overlord of the Türks, who fighting to hold his throne, was doing the same. When the Eastern Wei, made an alliance with Anagui, the Western Wei, in 545, formed an alliance with Bumīn, the ruler of the Ashina/Türks – and Anagui's subject. When the Avars refused Bumīn an Avar royal bride (in return for his help against the Tiele, another subject tribal confederation of the Rouran), the Western Wei happily sent him a Wei bride and Bumīn promptly revolted in 552, destroying the Rouran/Asian Avar state. Thus, was the Türk state born, in an era of crisis in its overlord state and manipulations by neighboring empires. China was the midwife. It was a bloody delivery and the child proved to be troublesome.

The Türks rapidly conquered the tribes of the Eurasian steppes, forming an empire that extended from the Black Sea to Manchuria and ruling over a host of Turkic, Mongolic, Iranian and other peoples. All of them, politically, became "Türks." They also brought major portions of the Silk Road under their control. We need not dwell on the complex details of Türk-Byzantine relations and interactions with China, which had revived under the Sui and then Tang dynasties. We will simply note that the Tang conquered the eastern Qaghans (for administrative purposes, the Türks split into eastern and western Qaghanates in the last quarter of the sixth-early seventh century) in 630 and the western Qaghanate by 659. The eastern Türks were brought under direct Chinese rule, moved into China to serve as guard units on the frontier while their aristocracy was coopted into the cosmopolitan servitor class of the Tang. In 682, the eastern Türks revolted, reestablished their empire in the east and much of the west but, consumed by internal bickering and constant warfare against their subject populations, the eastern Türks collapsed in 742-743 and were replaced by the Uyghurs (744-840), a subject people that had been part of the Toquz

Oghuz confederation in the larger union of Tiele tribes. The western Türks, also divided, fought among themselves, against the Arabs and faded away by 766. In the course of this turmoil, a second wave of Turkic tribal groupings left Mongolia and the adjoining regions, migrated westward to the steppes of Central Eurasia and incorporated the other Turkic tribes that had been coming to the region since Hunnic times, as well as Iranian and Finno-Ugric peoples. Although they did not form states, the political traditions of the Türk Empire continued among them – albeit on a sub-Qaghanal scale. A lingering sense of Türk consciousness continued, at least on the cultural level, expressed in the literature produced by the Uyghurs (who had their own, different core traditions), written in what they called the “Türk language” as late as the eleventh century and by the Qarakhanid realm, later successors of the Türks, who according to Maḥmūd al-Kāshgharī, a Qarakhanid prince writing in the 1070s, termed their language *Türk*. The tribal confederations, however, used their own ethnonyms (Qarluq, Oghuz, Kimek etc.).

These Turkic peoples were overwhelmingly shamanists, but they had been in contact with variants of Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism (adopted in 762 as the state religion of the Uyghurs), Judaism (adopted by the Khazar empire in stages from the late 8th to mid- 9th century) and Nestorian Christianity. Now, in Central Eurasia, they were in direct contact with areas that had come firmly under Arabo-Muslim rule by the mid-8th century, producing initially constant warfare and by the 10th century, the beginnings of the Islamization of various Turkic peoples resulting more from peaceful commercial and cultural interaction than warfare. The Arabs, although aware of the different Turkic tribes and confederations, viewed them as branches of one people, al-Atrāk, “the Turks” who, for the most part, spoke mutually intelligible tongues – much like the Arabs themselves. The Arabo-Turkic encounter and Islamization played an important role in shaping a new consciousness of Türk. Among the Arabs (and the Byzantines), Turk

became a generic for Eurasian steppe nomads. The early Turkic converts to Islam, in particular among the Oghuz and Qarluq tribal unions, were called *Türkmen* to distinguish themselves from their pagan kinsmen. As the Turkic groupings became increasingly Islamized by the 11th century (with some notable exceptions) and had begun to create their own Turko-Islamic states in Central Eurasia, the name *Türkmen* came to be applied largely, but not exclusively to one grouping of Turks, the Oghuz, who lived closest to Islamic Central Eurasia and were becoming most influenced by its Irano-Muslim culture. One grouping of Islamized Oghuz, led by the house of Seljuk, between 1040 and by 1055 became masters of much of the Caliphal heartland. In 1071, they defeated the Byzantines and began the conquest of Anatolia, producing, ultimately – and several empires later, modern Turkey. It was this Islamo-Turkic interaction that helped to fix the name Turk to these peoples as a whole.

Ethnonyms take shape in multiple environments, in both that of the “host” and that of the “significant other” - often a major neighboring state and this was certainly true of the Turkic world. Internally, they were still very much aware of their differences in dialect, culture and of those who were Turkicizing, but to the outside world all were “Turks” and they accepted this identity in a Muslim milieu.

This leads to our next stage. In the early 13th century, another series of migrations in the steppe was set in motion by the Mongol conquests. Chinggis Khan was aware of the Türk imperial model and cognizant of the complexities of controlling mobile tribes. He, having masterfully used the system, set about dismantling the old tribal order. Tribes were broken up and parceled out to the various personal armies created for his sons. The whole of the Eurasian tribal world was thrown into turmoil. The loyalty of the tribesmen was to be directed towards the *altan urugh*, the Golden Clan of the Chinggisids, not their now dispersed tribal leaders. The

components of most of the Turkic peoples of Central Eurasia (and the Middle East) today reflect this program of breaking up and redistributing the tribes.

In Central Eurasia, Turkic-speakers outnumbered the relatively small numbers of Mongols who remained in the region and Turkic, in one form or another, became the lingua franca. Thus, the Mongol conquests completed the Turkization of much of Central Eurasia as well. The various Chinggisid polities clashed, divided, reconfigured themselves etc. The bulk of the Turkic world entered modern times under the leadership of one or another descendant of the *altan urugh* – with the very considerable exception of the Ottoman Empire, which had nonetheless begun as a frontier statelet of the contracting 14th century Chinggisid world. In Western and Central Eurasia and Siberia, the various Turkic peoples were brought under Russian rule in the course of the 16th through 19th centuries. The Tsarist government, like other empires of its time, began to map their alien subjects (инородцы) and give them fixed names so that officialdom could deal with them— not an easy task. Some of this population was still highly mobile. Some had multiple names; others lacked a common name. For many, especially when dealing with “outsiders,” religion was the most important identity-marker. The bulk of the Turkic peoples were Muslim, ranging from those who were deeply versed in Islam to those who were still largely shamanists with an Islamic veneer. Many that are today recognized as one people would have hardly considered themselves as such then. The “real” Uzbeks (Özbeks), who conquered Uzbekistan ca. 1500, are today largely in the northern parts of the country that bears their name and speak a form of Turkic that is much closer to Qazaq (Qïpchaq, a northwestern Turkic language) than to official Uzbek (a “Türkî” or Southeastern Turkic language). The latter grew out of Iranized dialects of the old Chaghatay language, shaped under Mongol and Timurid rule. In the past, Özbeks despised the Sarts, people of Turkic background that had sedentarized

or sedentary Tajiks who had Turkicized but were now also officially “Uzbeks” and consider themselves distinct from Chaghatays, Qarluqs and other remnants of pre-1500 Turkic populations. Bilingualism (Tajik and Uzbek) is common in the cities. Their western neighbors, the Türkmén, in the 19th century, were divided among five different political entities: some were “subjects” – rather obstreperously - of the Bukharan amirs, others of the khans of Khiva, yet others of the Russians and Persian rulers. They raided and plundered everybody. Dividing lines were obscure. Some Türkmén called themselves Uzbeks – sometimes. Sometimes, they simply would not answer government officials or ethnographers inquiring about their identity. Some tribal groupings had the same name but spoke different languages and had different customs –yet claimed to be one and accepted the others as such. Others with the same name did not. The Qazaqs were called Qırghız and the Qırghız were called Qara Qırghız. The Soviets decided who would be who - but it was not an easy task – and they had a political agenda as well, driven in part by fears of the unification of the various Turko-Islamic peoples into a “Turkestani” state.

In 1921, a group of East Turkistani intellectuals decided to revive the long-forgotten name Uyghur (not used since the 16th century) and now applied it to the sedentary Turkî-speaking groupings of Xinjiang (of mixed Turkic, Iranian and Tokharian ancestry) who up to then had identified themselves by locality. Thus, were the Uyghurs “reborn.” After the Russian revolution, a group of Siberian Turkic intellectuals from various clans to which the Russians had given the name Abakan or Minusinsk Tatars (they had no common name) decided to declare *Khakas* their national name (they had been given an autonomous region and needed a name). Someone had read Bichurin’s Russian translation of Chinese sources on Central Eurasia and had chanced on the name Харяс (Russian transcription of Xia-jia-si, the Chinese rendering of Qırghız). They were in the same region, ergo, they decided, Khakas must be their real name. So,

a new name was born, based on sloppy scholarship. In reality, the Khakas have some connections to the ancient Yenisei Qırghız people, substantial elements of which had migrated westward earlier to form the present-day Qırghız/Kyrgyz people.

We could cite many case studies. In brief, the modern Turkic nations of Central Eurasia are largely creations of the Soviet era, a process shaped by ideology and political necessity, but building in some instances on deeper roots. Like the British and the French in the Middle East and Africa, they sometimes slapped together different, but more or less related groups and told them they were one people. Literary languages were created – sometimes deliberately selecting a dialect that would be the most different from their neighbors. The fear of Pan-Turkism lingered.

Ethnogenesis is not finished. It never really is. The Turkic peoples of Central Eurasia today are shaping new identities for themselves, sometimes reviving older traditions, sometimes retaining “traditions” created by the Soviets and sometimes creating new traditions. History, of course, is being used and abused – as it always has been in the shaping of ethnicity.