

The Turkic Speaking Peoples 2,000 years of Art and Culture from Inner Asia to the Balkans

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This is a comprehensive cultural history of Turkic speaking peoples presented in 34 articles and nearly 400 photographs. Over the last 2000 years Turkic peoples spread from the borders of China to Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean. They founded and lived under several states and coexisted with peoples of different faiths and cultures. Despite this, Turkic peoples have maintained continuity in common culture up to our time which is evidenced most clearly in studies on Turkic languages. Language contacts form a significant part of interactions among Turkic peoples and between Turkic and other peoples, besides being an essential determinant of identity. In his Foreword, Professor Bernt Brendemoen of the University of Oslo points to recent advances in the study of Turkic languages and language contact, in particular the works of Lars Johanson, a contributor to the volume. He notes the original contributions the book makes with regard to approach and perspective, especially its interest in borrowings and influences between cultures.

Mr. Ergun Cagatay, wrote the Preface where he tells the story of how the idea of the book emerged and its actual preparation. Over ten years, Mr. Cagatay made extensive trips to Central Asia, traveled more than 150,000 kilometers and took 30,000 photographs. He depicts the Turkic world of Central Asia with references to history and his own observation: nomadic culture, cultural heritage, religion, the effects of the Soviet period, traditions which disappeared and persisted, and other facts relating to the people and the region. The Introduction is by Professor Dogan Kuban, Professor of Architecture and Urban Conservation. Professor Kuban discusses crucial issues relating to perspective and definition – among others, definition of identity, territory – in the study of Turkic history and the history of nations in general. He reviews the main stages and distinct features of Turkic cultural history.

He underscores the importance of interactions between peoples in shaping this history, an aspect highlighted in the conception of the book.

The first part on Language and Identity is followed by the seven chapters of Part II on the Turco-Eurasian Symbiosis each addressing one region or stage of the symbioses of Turkic cultures with other cultures, such as the Turco-Chinese, the Turco-Central Asian-Persian, the Turco-Slavic, the Turco-Arab, and the formation of Turkish culture in Anatolia. Part III is on Religion, Part IV is on Art and Architecture, and the last part reflects the Contemporary Scene. The chapters cover all aspects of life in the Turkic world past and present, from political environment to cuisine.

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