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worship. It was the prevailing religion of the Turks, Mongols, Hungarians, Bulgars, Xiongnu, and, possibly, the Huns, and the religion of the several medieval states: Göktürk Khaganate, Western Turkic Khaganate, Old Great Bulgaria, Danube Bulgaria, Volga Bulgaria and Eastern Tourkia (Khazaria). In Irk Bitig, Tengri is mentioned as Türük Tängrisi (God of Turks).

Tengrism has been advocated in intellectual circles of the Turkic nations of Central Asia (including Tatarstan, Buryatia, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan) since the dissolution of the Soviet Unionduring the 1990s. Still practiced, it is undergoing an organized revival in Sakha, Khakassia, Tuva and other Turkic nations in Siberia. Burkhanism, a movement similar to **Tengrism**, is concentrated in Altay.

Khukh tengri means "blue sky" in Mongolian, Mongolians still pray to Munkh Khukh Tengri ("Eternal Blue



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Sky") and Mongolia is sometimes poetically called the "Land of Eternal Blue Sky" (Munkh Khukh Tengriin Oron) by its inhabitants. In modern Turkey, **Tengrism** is known as the Göktanrı dini ("Sky God religion"); the Turkish "Gök" (sky) and "**Tanrı**" (God) correspond to the Mongolian khukh (blue) and Tengri (sky), respectively. According to Hungarian archaeological research, the religion of the Hungarians until the end of the 10th century (before Christianity) was **Tengrism**.



Tengri in Old Turkic script (written from right to left as Teniri).

Relationship with shamanism



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The word "**Tengrism**" is a fairly new term. It is conventionally used to describe a form of Tengri-centered shamanism that prevailed on the Eurasian steppes mostly among early Turkic and Mongol Khanates.

Tengrism differs from Siberian shamanism in that the polities practicing it were not small bands of hunter gatherers like the Paleosiberians but a continuous succession of pastoral, semi-sedentarized Khanates and empires from the Xiongnu Empire (founded 209 BC) till the Mongol Empire (13th century). Among Turkic peoples it was radically supplanted by Islam while in Mongolia it survives as a synthesis with Tibetan Buddhism while surviving in purer forms around Lake Khovsgol and Lake Baikal. Unlike Siberian shamanism which has no written tradition, Tengrism can be identified from Turkic and Mongolic historical texts like the Orkhon inscriptions, Secret History of the Mongols and Altan Tobchi. However, these texts are more



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historically oriented and are not strictly religious texts like the scriptures and sutras of sedentary civilizations which have elaborate doctrines and religious stories. On a scale of complexity Tengrism lies somewhere between the Proto-Indo-European religion (a prestate form of pastoral shamanism on the western steppe) and its later form the Vedic religion. The eastern steppe where Tengrism developed had more centralized, hierarchical polities than the western steppe. Tengrism has been noted as more centralized, less polytheistic, less myth-intensive and more historically focused than the paganism that grew out of the western Proto-Indo-European religion. Nonetheless, the chief god Tengri (Heaven) is considered strikingly similar to the Indo-European sky god *Dyeus and the structure of the reconstructed Proto-Indo-European religion is closer to that of the early Turks than to the religion of any people of Near Eastern or Mediterranean antiquity.