

Cultural Cooperation in the Turkic World: Turkic Capitals of Culture

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1. Introduction

Capitals of Culture programs have become increasingly popular since the 1980s. They were carried out under different names including Capitals of Islamic Culture, American Capital of Culture, Southeast Asian Capitals of Culture, Cultural Capitals of the Commonwealth of Independent States, and East Asian Cities of Culture. It can be beneficial to examine the impacts of these programs on cultural cooperation among the cities based on the context of historical development and theoretical framework. As the state-centric perception of international relations began to change towards the 21st century, the cities emerged as pivotal actors of cultural cooperation in several regions of the world. As more emphasis was placed on the role of international law and international organizations especially in the period between the two world wars, international organizations emerged as one of the main actors of international relations. In the following process, the states expanded the international system of international organizations while these international organizations restructured the system to include cities in the international system. The programs like sister cities, honorary citizenships, regional municipal associations, and capitals of culture emerged during this period can be considered as important developments reshaping the role of cities in international relations.

Turkic states also established the International Organization of Turkic Culture (TURKSOY) in 1993, after they declared their independence following the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). TURKSOY developed the concept of

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Turkic Capitals of Culture in 2010 and launched the process in 2012. Since 2012, TURKSOY has been granting the title of “Turkic Capital of Culture” to a city in the Turkic world every year. The following cities were selected as the Capitals of Culture in the Turkic world: Astana – Kazakhstan (2012), Eskisehir – Turkey (2013), Kazan – Tatarstan (2014), Merv – Turkmenistan (2015), Sheki – Azerbaijan (2016), Turkistan – Kazakhstan (2017), Kastamonu – Turkey (2018), Osh – Kyrgyzstan (2019) and Hive – Uzbekistan (2020). Thus, the Organization has selected at least one city from Turkey, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, which are the founding members of TURKSOY, since the inception of the project.

Although TURKSOY members are also members of other international organizations including the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) as well as the United Nations, TURKSOY membership plays an important role in terms of the Capital of Culture program, which promotes the cities in the Turkic world at the national and regional level. This study examines the cultural cooperation between TURKSOY member countries and cities that are selected as the Cultural Capitals of the Turkic World. Within the framework of this program, it also explores the contributions of a wide range of cultural products ranging from literature to music, architecture to painting, city life to culture. For this purpose, the study first explains the historical background of cultural cooperation organizations established in the Turkic world, including TÜRKSOY. Then, it examines the developments and cultural cooperation activities in the cities selected as the Turkic Capitals of Culture since 2012 under separate sections in order to reveal their impacts on the Turkic identity. The last part of the study provides an assessment on the implementation of the Turkic Capitals of Culture program along with the recommendations for developing and improving cultural cooperation between these countries.

2. Cultural Cooperation Organizations in the Turkic World

After the Turkic Republics gained their independence in 1991, various institutions were established with the support of Turkey to rapidly improve the cooperation mechanisms between these countries. These organizations carried out several programs in order to strengthen cooperation in academic, political, economic and cultural fields.

The Cooperation Council of Turkic-Speaking Countries (Turkic Council) is the most important of these regional organizations and it is the umbrella organization of five other organizations. Suleyman Demirel, who was the prime minister of the Republic of Turkey at the time, launched the First Summit of Turkic Speaking Countries, which provided the basis of the Turkic Council.¹ Demirel started organizing these summits in 1992, while visiting Central Asia and Azerbaijan. The first summit was held in Ankara on 30-31 October 1992. The Presidents of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, as well as the President of the Republic of Turkey, Turgut Özal and Prime Minister Suleyman Demirel attended this meeting and they signed the Ankara Declaration² at the end of the meeting.³ The parties aimed to strengthen the relations further and build cooperation based on the principles of independence, sovereignty, respect for territorial integrity, and non-interference in each other's internal affairs.⁴ At the summit held in Bishkek in August 1995, they highlighted the need to preserve the great cultural and historical heritage of the Turkic populations again and all parties expressed their willingness to cooperate and improve their relations.⁵ In Astana, at the 6th Summit in 1998, the parties decided to establish a permanent secretariat.

Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Turkey signed the Nakhchivan Agreement of October 3, 2009 and became members of the Turkic Council,⁶ which was established in Istanbul, based on

1 See: "Cooperation Council of Turkic-Speaking Countries", accessed May 25, 2018, <http://www.turkkon.org>.

2 For the full text of the Ankara Declaration, see "Ankara Declaration", accessed May 25, 2018, http://www.turkkon.org/Assets/dokuman/11_AnkaraBildirisi1992_1.DevletBaskanlariZirvesi_20140418_104048.pdf.

3 Aidarbek Amirbek et al., "Türk Dili Konuşan Ülkeler Entegrasyonu: Tarihsel Geçmişi ve Kurumsallaşması" ("Integration of Turkic-Speaking Countries: Historical Background and Institutionalization"), *Journal of Regional Studies*, 1, no. 3 (2017): 166.

4 Adam Balcer, "Between Energy and Soft Pan-Turkism: Turkey and the Turkic Republics". *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, 11, no. 2 (2012): 154.

5 Dinara Murzaeva, "Kyrgyzstan-Turkey Relations: Cooperation in Political and Educational Spheres", *Review of European Studies*, 6, no. 3 (2014): 41.

6 The Secretariat of the Turkic Council is located in Istanbul, Turkey. Founding Secretary-General Turkish Diplomat Ambassador Halil Akinci served between 2010 and 2014. Later, Ambassador Ramil Hasanov, an Azerbaijani diplomat, was appointed as the Secretary-General of the Turkic Council for the period between 2014 and 2018. Ambassador Baghdad Amrayev of Kazakhstan was appointed as the Secretary-General of the Turkic Council on September 3, 2018 and continues to work in this position.

the political will that emerged in the “Summits of Turkic-Speaking States” since 1992.⁷ According to Article 2 of the Nakhchivan Agreement, the main goals are to strengthen mutual trust between the parties, maintain peace inside and outside the region, develop similar approaches on foreign policy issues, improve coordination to combat international terrorism, separatism, extremism and cross-border crimes. The Council also aimed to develop effective regional and bilateral cooperation in all areas related to common goals; create favorable conditions for trade and investment; sustain comprehensive and balanced economic growth; support social and cultural development; strengthen the rule of law; discuss good governance practices and protect human rights; expand the interaction in the fields of science, technology, education and culture; encourage interaction with the mass media and enhance communication; promote the exchange of information and judicial cooperation in legal matters.⁸

Nevertheless, this type of institutionalization, which can be clearly seen among these Turkic states, has not gained such popularity among all Central Asian countries. Turkmenistan also attended the Istanbul Summit in 2010 and supported the Council’s idea; however, it did not become a member of the Turkic Council. Turkmenistan claimed that its stance stemmed from its status as a neutral state, which is considered the basis of Turkmenistan’s foreign policy.⁹ However, the participation of the President of Turkmenistan at the 2010 Istanbul Summit can be seen as a success; since Ashgabat had always sent its lower-level officials to the summits before this summit. Uzbekistan, on the other hand, did not participate in the summits of the Turkic Council for a long time due to the crises in Turkish-Uzbek relations.¹⁰ However, Uzbekistan’s President Shavkat Mirziyoyev announced on 30 April 2018 that Uzbekistan

⁷ Efe Çaman and M. Ali Akyurt, “Caucasus and Central Asia in Turkish Foreign Policy: The Time has Come for a New Regional Policy”, *Relations* 10, no. 2-3 (2011): 49.

⁸ “General Information about the Turkic Council”, accessed May 25, 2018, http://www.turkkon.org/tr-TR/genel_bilgi/1/10.

⁹ As of 12 December 1995, the UN recognized Turkmenistan as a “permanent neutral state” and adopted December 12 as “International Day of Neutrality” with the resolution no. 71/275 dated February 2, 2017. For more information, see “International Day of Neutrality”, Accessed December 16, 2018, <http://www.un.org/en/events/neutralidaday/background.shtml>.

¹⁰ Balcer, “Between Energy and Soft Pan-Turkism: Turkey and the Turkic Republics”, 153.

would join the Turkic Council. Uzbekistan, which completed the necessary procedures to join the Turkic Council in September 2019, officially confirmed its decision to join the Turkic Council at the Summit of Heads of State in Baku on October 15, 2019.¹¹ The participation of Uzbekistan, as one of the most important countries in the Turkic world, can be seen as a milestone development.

In 2009, the 9th Summit of the Cooperation Council of Turkic-speaking Countries was held in Nakhchivan. During the summit, Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev proposed to establish an international scientific center with the task to conduct researches on the Turkic world. Following this proposal, The Turkic Academy was established in Astana, Kazakhstan on 25 May 2010, under the Ministry of Education and Science.¹² The Turkic Academy gained the status of an international organization on 28 August 2014 and continued its activities under the name of the International Turkic Academy.¹³ The International Turkic Academy, which is budgeted by Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey, coordinates scientific researches between the member states.¹⁴ It also aims to cooperate with Turkic universities and create a special fund for supporting scientific researches in the fields of culture, education, and science.¹⁵

In 2012, the 11th Summit of the Cooperation Council of Turkic-Speaking Countries was held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. At the Summit, the members decided to establish the Turkic Culture and Heritage Foundation in Baku, Azerbaijan, in order to "protect, research and support Turkic culture and heritage through the activities, projects

¹¹ "Özbekistan Cumhurbaşkanı Mirziyoyev: Türk Dili Konuşan Ülkeler İşbirliği Konseyi'ne katılacağız" ("President of Uzbekistan Mirziyoyev: We will join the Cooperation Council of Turkic-Speaking Countries", Anadolu Agency, Accessed May 25, 2018, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/ozbekistan-cumhurbaskani-mirziyoyev-turk-dili-konusan-ulkeler-isbirligi-konseyine-katililacagiz/1131701>).

¹² See "International Turkic Academy", Accessed May 25, 2018, <http://twesco.org>.

¹³ The Headquarters of the International Turkic Academy is located in Astana, Kazakhstan. The Kazakhstani scientist and diplomat, Shedirali Darhan has served as the President of the International Turkic Academy since 2014.

¹⁴ Mustafa Bıyıklı, "Türk Dünyası Ortak Kuruluşu olarak Türk Akademisi Uluslararası Teşkilatı (TWESCO), Rolü ve İşbirlikleri" (International Turkic Academy (TWESCO), Its Role and Partners in the Turkic World), *Journal of Social Sciences of Dumlupınar University Afro-Eurasian Special Issue* (2016): 414.

¹⁵ Balcer, "Between Energy and Soft Pan-Turkism: Turkey and the Turkic Republics", 155.

and programs it supports and finances." Since then, the Foundation has continued its activities.¹⁶

The Parliamentary Assembly of Turkic-Speaking Countries (TURKPA) was established on November 21, 2008 according to the agreement signed by the Heads of parliaments of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and the Republic of Turkey.¹⁷ Its secretariat is located in Baku, Azerbaijan.¹⁸

The Turkic Business Council was established in 2011 to enhance economic cooperation by joining the private sector institutions of the four Member States of the Turkic Council.¹⁹ Member states also considered the possibility of the establishment of a bank and an insurance company to support the Turkic Business Council.²⁰ The last meeting of the Turkic Business Council was held on 14 December 2018 in Tashkent, capital of Uzbekistan, under the chairmanship of Baghdad Amreyev, Secretary-General of the Turkic Council.²¹

The International Organization of Turkic Culture (TURKSOY) is a regional institution established in Ankara with an agreement signed in 1993 by the Ministers of Culture of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Turkey. TURKSOY's observers include the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Altai, Sakha, Tuva, Hakas Republics in Russian Federation and the Gagauz Place under Moldova.²² TURKSOY's activities are determined by the Permanent Council

¹⁶ The headquarters of the Turkic Foundation for Culture and Heritage is located in Baku, Azerbaijan. The foundation is chaired by Günay Efendiyeveva, an Azerbaijani diplomat.

¹⁷ Carlo Frappi, "Central Asia's Place in Turkey's Foreign Policy", *Analysis*, no: 225 (2013): 9.

¹⁸ Kyrgyzstan politician Altynbek Mamaiusupov has been the Secretary-General of TURKPA since 2017. See "Parliamentary Assembly of Turkic-Speaking Countries", Accessed May 25, 2018, <http://turk-pa.org>.

¹⁹ It was decided to establish the Secretariat of the Turkic Business Council in Istanbul.

²⁰ Balcer, "Between Energy and Soft Pan-Turkism: Turkey and the Turkic Republics", 155.

²¹ See: "Turkic Council Secretary-General Baghdad Amreyev chaired the Turkish Business Council meeting held in Tashkent on December 14, 2018.", Turkic Council, Accessed December 12, 2018, <http://www.turkkon.org/tr-TR/turk-konseyi-genel-sekreteri-baghdad-amreyev-14-aralik-2018-tarihinde-taskent-60%-regulated-turk-is-council-meeting-presidency-etmistir/3/54/5048>.

²² See: "International Organization of Turkic Culture", TURKSOY, Accessed May 25, 2018, www.turksoy.org.

of Ministers of Culture of Turkish-Speaking Countries and implemented by the general-secretariat of TURKSOY.²³

Turkic Republics, apart from the Turkic Council and its affiliated organizations, also cooperate through various international organizations. Turkey, Iran and Pakistan established the Regional Cooperation for Development in 1964 and renamed it the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) in 1985. Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan also joined the organization in 1992, following the dissolution of the USSR. This regional organization laid the foundations for economic cooperation in a wider geography. Turkey played an important role in the process by persuading the Turkic Republics to join the Economic Cooperation Organization.²⁴

Lastly, it is also necessary to mention the Eurasian Islamic Council. The Directorate of Religious Affairs has been providing religious services to Turkish citizens living in different countries since 1971. After 1990, it also aimed to provide information and services to the Turkic Republics which began the process of building their national and religious identities. In line with this aim, the Directorate convened the Eurasian Islamic Council to exchange ideas and develop coordination with these countries. Since then, the Eurasian Islamic Council has held 9 meetings.²⁵

3. Capitals of Culture in the Turkic World

TURKSOY has executed the Turkic Capitals of Culture program since 2010. At the 10th summit of Turkic-Speaking Countries, the members decided to grant the title of Turkic Capital of Culture to a city every year upon the recommendation of TURKSOY. This program aims to reveal, develop, protect, pass on and perpetuate shared features of Turkic culture, language, history, art, traditions and customs by establishing amicable relations between Turkic-speaking populations and countries; contribute to world peace, civilization, science and art while trying to achieve cultural unity and solidarity by conducting scientific, cultural, artistic researches,

²³ TURKSOY's headquarters is located in Ankara, Turkey. Kazakhstani artist/diplomat Düsen Kaseinov has been serving as the Secretary-General of TURKSOY since 2008.

²⁴ Headquarters of the Economic Cooperation Organization is located in Tehran, Iran.

²⁵ See: "Eurasian Islamic Council", Directorate of Religious Affairs, accessed May 25, 2018, <http://avrasyaislamsurasi.diyamet.gov.tr/tr-TR/Content/Index/1>.

studies and activities; promote Turkic culture at the international level while raising the awareness that Turkic culture is based on the principles of love, tolerance and rationality; serve civilization, world peace and human rights in this way; support scientific researches on shared history, language and literature, culture and art of the Turkic populations as a whole; foster an environment to pass down traditions, national history, mother tongue, literature, culture, art and customs to next generations; and support new cultural structures in the region and around the world while considering the new balances in international relations.²⁶

3.1. Turkic Capital of Culture in 2012: Astana (Kazakhstan)

The Turkic Capital of Culture program started in 2012 with the city of Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan. In 2012, the city hosted several activities both as the Turkic Capital of the Culture and as the Cultural Capital of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

The city of Astana, which played an important role due to its location in the northern part of the country, changed its name many times, mainly due to political reasons. After Kazakhstan declared its independence in 1991, the city was renamed Akmola, which was renamed Tselinograd, and was declared the capital in 1997 and renamed Astana in 1998. As of March 2019, the city acquired the new name of Nur-Sultan, referring to former President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan.

Kazakhstan has a low population density with a population of approximately 19 million people and the population of Astana (Nur-sultan) is nearly 1 million. This population consists of very different ethnic groups: Kazakhs (69.4%), Russians (19.9%), Ukrainians (2.1%), Belarusians (0.6%), Germans (1.1%), Koreans (0.7%), Poles (0.4%), Uzbeks (1.2%), Turks (0.1%), Azerbaijanis (0.4%), Kyrgyzs (0.4%), Turkmens, Bashkurts (0.2%), Tatars (1.5%), Uighurs (0.1%) are among the main groups living in Astana.²⁷

Astana's process of being the Turkic Capital of Culture began with the opening ceremony held on February 24, 2012, at the world-famous Peace and Harmony Palace (Pyramid Building). More than

²⁶ See: "Capital of Culture in the Turkic World", TURKSOY, Accessed September 1, 2019, https://www.turksoy.org/tr/news/2013/07/13/turk_dunyasi_kultur_baskenti.

²⁷ Ainur Nogayeva, "Turkic Capital of Culture in 2012: Astana," in *The Cultural Capitals of the Turkish World*, ed. F.Yıldız (Ankara: Nobel Yay., 2020), 73-126.

250 artists from various ethnic groups including Kazakhs, Turks, Azeris, Kyrgyz, Volga Tatars, Baskurts, Hakas, Altai, Tuva, Gagauz, Northern Cyprus and Crimean Tatars attended this ceremony.²⁸ During the ceremony, the participants emphasized that the Turkic world embraced the unity of all Turkic populations no matter if they have established an independent state or not. At the ceremony, Darhan Minbay, Kazakhstan's Minister of Culture noted that more than twenty events would be held by Astana in order to help the integration of the Turkic peoples, and said that they would make every effort to promote and uphold our shared values.²⁹

During 2012, Astana carried out several activities for the Turkic world including exhibitions, concerts, scientific meetings, and festivals. Throughout the year, it also conducted successful activities to promote Kazakh culture in the world. These activities included the international traditional music festival called Music of The Great Steppe. According to the Kazakhstan Ministry of Culture, the festival aimed to introduce Kazakh traditional folk music, which contributed significantly to the cultural development of world civilizations. However, the festival also promoted all genres of Kazakh traditional folk music, especially those played with rarely used musical instruments. Astana's successful execution of this process increased the regional and global recognition of the Turkic Capitals of Culture project and provided an exemplary start for the subsequent Capitals of Culture in the Turkic World.³⁰

Astana's process as the Capital of Culture was not limited to one-year activities. Astana also made decisions that would leave long-lasting impacts. Within this framework and scope of the 2012 Capital of Culture activities, agreements were made with other countries for renaming the streets and parks as country and city

²⁸ See: "Kazakhstan Celebrates The Selection of Astana as the "Cultural Capital of the Turkic World", accessed September 1, 2019, <https://www.haberler.com/kazakistan-astana-nin-turk-dunyasi-kultur-baskenti-3392956-haber/>.

²⁹ "Turkic Capital of Culture in 2012: Astana's Opening Ceremony", TURKSOY, accessed September 1, 2019, https://www.turksoy.org/tr/news/2013/12/16/turk_dunyasi_kultur_bas.

³⁰ " 'Astana 2012 Türk Dünyası Kültür Başkenti' Çerçevesinde Ulu Bozkır Müziği Festivali Düzenlenecek" (The Great Steppe Music Festival will be held within the framework of 'Astana 2012 Turkic Capital of Culture'), accessed September 1, 2019, Türk Ocakları Genel Merkezi, <https://www.turkocaklari.org.tr/turk-dunyasi-haberleri/astana-2012-turk-dunyasi-kultur-baskenti-cercevesinde-ulu-bozkir-muzigi-festivali-duzenlenecek-419> "

names. These agreements were not limited to the countries of the Turkic world. For example, according to the agreement reached in September 2012, the name of the Hungarian capital Budapest was given to a street in Astana and the name Astana was given to a street in Budapest. A decision on sister cities also left a lasting mark in the region. Within the project of sister cities under the framework of the Turkic Capitals of Culture program, Astana also signed sister city agreements with the capitals of the Turkic Republics such as Bishkek, Ashgabat, Baku, Tashkent, as well as other Turkic cities including the ones in Russian Federation such as Ufa and Kazan. Astana also has sister cities of Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir in Turkey. Sister cities played an important role in the selection of Astana as the Capital of Culture in the Turkic World and in the regional relations developed by the city after becoming the capital. The number of Astana's sister cities reached 34 now. Astana had already been awarded the title of "World City" by UNESCO's decision in 1999.³¹

3.2. Turkic Capital of Culture in 2013: Eskisehir (Turkey)

Turkey, which previously had some experience in the capital of culture projects since Istanbul was selected as the European Capital of Culture in 2010, also gained this experience within the context of the Turkic World for the first time after Eskisehir received the title of Turkic Capital of Culture. Besides the intensity and quality of the activities conducted, Eskisehir successfully carried this title in 2013 especially by: (i) accompanying a theme ("migration") for the Turkic Capital of Culture program in 2013, and (ii) establishing a unit ("Agency") responsible for the process.

Eskisehir played an important role in the history from Phrygians to Seljuks, from Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Turkey. Eskisehir's city identity has been shaped by migration and migrants since the Ottoman Empire, especially due to migration processes from Crimea, the Caucasus and the Balkans. In this context, the theme of "migration" was the right choice in the process of Eskisehir's experience as the Capital of Culture in the Turkic World. Eskisehir also has a population (880,000) close to the population of Astana,

³¹ Nogayeva, "2012 Türk Dünyası Kültür Başkenti: Astana" (Turkic Capital of Culture in 2012: Astana), 92.

the previous Capital of Culture in the Turkic World.³²

Secondly, Eskisehir established the Agency for the Capital of Culture in 2013 to coordinate the activities of public and civil institutions and to conduct this process in the most efficient way, since it was the first time for Turkey that a city granted the title of Capital of Culture in the Turkic World. This agency aimed to improve amicable relations between Turkish-speaking peoples and countries.³³ The Agency, which started its activities with the highest level of support from Turkey and the Turkic World, carried out 210 activities during its time as the Capital of Culture, including a congress, symposium, workshop, meeting, summit, seminar, panel, commemoration and celebration, festival, reception, exhibition, stand opening, concert, show, poetry festival, theater, competition, social responsibility project, iftar dinner, award ceremony, and trip.³⁴

Eskisehir also established the Science, Culture and Arts Center of the Turkic World, which was allocated to Anadolu University in April 2017. This center was probably one of the most important achievements of the process in Eskisehir. Science, Culture and Arts Center in Anadolu University hosted the most important activities in the fields of science, culture and arts in the city, and served as a center visited by 350,000 people while carrying out more than 150 national and international activities as of April 2017. Furthermore, as the Capital of Culture, Eskisehir also signed 21 comprehensive and high-budget projects, including renovations of new monuments and historical sites such as Dede Korkut Park, Eti City and Migration Museum, Eskisehir Stadium; significant and permanent actions such as the construction of 8 culture houses, the publication of 118 books and other written materials, 13 documentaries and films for future generations.³⁵

Eskisehir's efforts to become a global city also contributed to its selection as the Turkic Capital of Culture in 2013. Eskisehir has sister

³² "Eskişehir'in nüfusu 2019 yılında kaç oldu?" (What was the population of Eskisehir in 2019?), Anadolu Newspaper, accessed September 1, 2019, <http://www.anadolugazetesi.com/eskisehir-in-nufusu-2019-yilinda-kac-oldu--106790.html>.

³³ "Türk Dünyası Vakfı" (Turkic World Foundation), <http://www.turkdunyasivakfi.org.tr/hakkimizda>.

³⁴ Mehmet Topal, "Turkic Capital of Culture in 2013: Eskisehir", in *The Cultural Capitals of the Turkish World*, ed. F.Yaldız (Ankara: Nobel Yay., 2020), 127-174.

³⁵ Topal, "Turkic Capital of Culture in 2013: Eskisehir", 142.

cities from several countries including Austria, Belgium, Germany, the USA, South Korea, China, and especially from the countries and regions of the Turkic World such as Crimea, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Abkhazia, Tatarstan. Approximately 30,000 students, academics and teachers benefited from bilateral cultural trips to Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Crimea, Tatarstan, Kosovo, Macedonia, Greece, Bulgaria, TRNC, Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and southeastern Turkey. In this process, the implementation of projects such as Esminyaturk (Turkish World Masterpieces Park), Turkic World Science, Culture and Arts Center, Eti City and Migration Museum added great value to the city identity and helped Eskisehir to become an attractive center to visit for the Turkic world.³⁶

As a result, Eskisehir carried out extensive activities in 2013, leaving long-lasting impacts for both the city residents and the whole Turkic world.

3.3. Turkic Capital of Culture in 2014: Kazan (Tatarstan – Russian Federation)

Kazan took over the title of Turkic Capital of Culture from Eskisehir and became the new Capital of Culture in the Turkic World in 2014. As the capital of Tatarstan, it is located within the borders of the Russian Federation. Kazan was established in 1005 as a military stronghold of the Idil Bulgarian State. Throughout its long history, the city was invaded by Mongols, came under the rule of the Golden Horde State, then it was captured by the Muscovite Tsardom and later on became the capital of the Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of Tatarstan under the USSR. On 30 August 1990, the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of Tatarstan adopted the State Declaration of Independence and Kazan was chosen as the capital of the Republic of Tatarstan. Kazan, which is the largest city in Tatarstan with a population of approximately 1.2 million, hosts 115 different ethnic groups, mainly Tatars and Russians, but also other groups including Chuvash, Udmurts, Mordvins, Maris, Bashkurts, Ukrainians, Belarussians, Tajiks, Armenians, Azeris, Uzbeks, Jews, Germans, Georgians and Kyrgyzs. Kazan city can be regarded as

³⁶ Topal, "Turkic Capital of Culture in 2013: Eskisehir", 147.

one of the most important centers in the history of civilizations.³⁷ UNESCO included the city in its World Heritage List in 2000 due to Kazan's historical and natural treasures.³⁸

Kazan received the title of Turkic Capital of Culture in 2014 upon the recommendation of Tatarstan President Rustem Minnihanov on May 30, 2012 at the TURKSOY Permanent Council Meeting held in Ufa (Bashkortostan). The official opening ceremony was held at Kazan State Opera and Ballet Hall and on April 26, 2014, on the 128th birthday of Gabdulla Tuqay, the famous poet of Tatar Turks. More than 50 artists from Tatarstan, Turkey, Bashkortostan, Hakasya, Crimea, Turkmenistan, Tuva, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan performed in the concert program held within the scope of the launch.³⁹ In 2014, Kazan organized several scientific, cultural, and artistic activities symbolizing the Turkic world.⁴⁰

After being selected as the Turkic Capital of Culture, Kazan also hosted further activities. For example, Turkish Hearths made study visits to Kaza within the scope of the "Turkic Capital of Culture: Kazan" project, which was supported by the Youth Projects Support Program of the Ministry of Youth and Sports and organized by the Turkish Hearths Headquarters. Young people from Turkey studied the historical, cultural, social and economic outlook of Kazan and the surrounding regions during their visit to Kazan, which took place between 10-16 May 2015.⁴¹

The following activities were carried out within the scope of activities in 2014: scientific analysis of the work of Mehmet Akif Ersoy and Gabdulla Tuqay; training programs and seminars to support the complementarity of the traditional structure of Turkic theatre culture with modern dramaturgy; assessment on the capacity of sculpture

³⁷ Guzel Sadykova, "Turkic Capital of Culture in 2014: Kazan", in *The Cultural Capitals of the Turkish World*, ed. F.Yaldız (Ankara: Nobel Yay., 2020), 175-214.

³⁸ "Historic and Architectural Complex of the Kazan Kremlin", UNESCO, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/980/>.

³⁹ "Turkish Capital of Culture in 2014: Kazan", TÜRKSOY, https://www.Turksoy.Org/Tr/News/2014/05/02/2014_Turk_Dunyasi_Kultur_Baskenti_Kazan

⁴⁰ Sadykova, "Turkic Capital of Culture in 2014: Kazan", 187-191.

⁴¹ "Türk Dünyası Kültür Başkenti Kazan Projesi - Kazan Gezisi" (Turkic Capital of Culture Kazan Project-Study Visit to Kazan). Türk Ocakları Genel Merkezi, accessed September 1, 2019, <https://www.turkocaklari.org.tr/genclik-kollari-faaliyetleri/turk-dunyasi-kultur-baskenti-kazan-projesi-kazan-gezisi-7534>

to represent historical reality; introduction of the authentic nature of Tatar folklore; a study on Islamic traditions and Turkish-Slavic symbiosis in the Turkic world; study on the subjectivity of Muslim cinema; hands-on training programs on the art of leather processing among Turkic peoples, presentation of historical evidence of shared life consciousness and analysis of musical diversity. These activities developed the entrepreneurial structure of Kazan while helping the city to develop its brand.⁴²

3.4. *Turkic Capital of Culture in 2015: Merv (Turkmenistan)*

The Ministers of Culture from Turkish-speaking countries held their 32nd Meeting of the Permanent Council in Kazan, the capital of Tatarstan, on 21 November 2014. During the meeting, several important decisions were made regarding the cultural and artistic life of the Turkic world. The most important decision at the meeting was the announcement of the city of Merv in Turkmenistan as the new Capital of Culture in the Turkic World in 2015.⁴³

Located on the historic Silk Road, the city of Merv hosted several civilizations in Turkistan and Persia throughout its 2500-year history. Turkmenistan is administratively divided into five provinces.⁴⁴ The city of Merv is located within the borders of the most crowded Mari province. It was also included in UNESCO's World Heritage List in 1999.⁴⁵

Although the city has a small population (120,000), it is a grand city in terms of its long history of civilizations.⁴⁶ Achaemenid Royal Inscriptions and the sacred texts of the Persians are among the earliest artifacts that mentioned the city of Merv. The city reached the peak of its splendor after Merv became the capital of the Great Seljuk Empire. After the Seljuks, the Harzemshahs controlled the

⁴² Sadykova, "214 Türk Dünyası Kültür Başkenti: Kazan" (Turkic Capital of Culture in 2014: Kazan), 189.

⁴³ "MERV: 2015 Türk Dünyası Kültür Başkenti" (MERV: Turkic Capital of Culture in 2015), TÜRKSOY, accessed September 1, 2019, <https://www.turksoy.org/tr/news/2015/06/29/merv-2015-turk-dunyasi-kultur-baskenti>.

⁴⁴ "Political and Constitutional Structure of Turkmenistan", accessed September 1, 2019, <http://www.bilgesam.org/incele/184/-turkmenistan%E2%80%99in-political-and-constitutional-structure/>.

⁴⁵ "State Historical and Cultural Park 'Ancient Merv'", UNESCO, accessed September 1, 2019, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/886/>.

⁴⁶ "Merv", *New World Encyclopedia*, <https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Merv>.

area until the Mongol invasion. Occupied in 1221 by Genghis Khan's son Tolui, the city was looted and the vast majority of its residents were slaughtered. Again, on Tolui's orders, the walls of Merv were destroyed. The city of Merv, which never regained its former glory after the Mongol invasion, came under the rule of the Timurids, Uzbeks, Safavids, Bukhara Emirate and Russians.⁴⁷

The official opening ceremony for the city of Merv as Turkic Capital of Culture in 2015 was held on January 27, 2015 in Merv, Turkmenistan, in cooperation with TURKSOY and Turkmenistan Ministry of Culture with the support of TIKA. The ceremony was held at the History Museum of Marı Province along with an exhibition of fine arts, crafts and photography of the Turkic world and a concert by Turkic bands and folklore groups at the Ruhıyet Palace.⁴⁸ Artists from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey, Bashkortus, Hakasya, Tva, Tatarstan, Saha, Altai, Kalmuk, Gagauz Place, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hungary and Bulgaria also took the stage at the ceremony.⁴⁹

Merv, which was declared the Cultural Capital of the Commonwealth of Independent States by the Commonwealth of Independent States in 2012, received the title of the Turkic Capital of Culture in 2015, during the 25th anniversary of Turkmenistan's independence and the 20th anniversary of its neutrality status. Tolerance was chosen as the prominent theme since Merv had been a meeting point for many peoples throughout history. Turkmenistan also aimed to make a contribution to world peace, civilization, science, and art through year-round activities and increase awareness that Turkish culture is based on the principles of love, tolerance, and rationality while promoting Turkish culture at the international level. The city of Merv played a central role in all these events and benefited from the title of Turkic Capital of Culture greatly as this ancient city developed in accordance with the title it won.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Soner Sağlam and Berdi Sarıyev, "2015 Türk Dünyası Kültür Başkenti: Merv" ["Turkish Capital of Culture in 2015: Merv"], in *Türk Dünyası Kültür Başkentleri [The Cultural Capitals of the Turkish World]*, ed. F.Yaldız (Ankara: Nobel Yay., 2020), 215-248.

⁴⁸ Sağlam and Sarıyev, "Turkic Capital of Culture in 2015: Merv", 228.

⁴⁹ "2015 Merv Türk Dünyası Kültür Başkenti" Açılış Töreni" (Opening Ceremony for Merv Turkic Capital of Culture), accessed September 1, 2019, <https://www.haberler.com/2015-merv-turk-dunyasi-kultur-baskenti-acilis-6913392-haberi/>.

⁵⁰ Sağlam and Sarıyev, "Turkic Capital of Culture in 2015: Merv", 231-232.

3.5. *Turkic Capital of Culture in 2016: Sheki (Azerbaijan)*

The city of Sheki, Azerbaijan, was selected as the Capital of Culture in the Turkic World in 2016 with the unanimous decision of all representatives attending the meeting held in Merv, Turkic Capital of Culture in 2015. The city, which was called the pearl of the Caucasus, became a meeting point for artists and scientists from different fields with year-round activities. These activities included music festivals, theatre festivals, horse racing, art exhibitions, book exhibitions and symposiums.⁵¹

Sheki is a city, which is known for its historical and cultural heritage. Before 2016, Sheki also hosted several festivals including International Theatre Festival, National Horsing Games Festival, and Silk Road International Music Festival. In 2012, TÜRKSOY declared the city of Sheki as the “Capital of Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Turkic World” and the year 2012 as the “year of Mirze Feteli Axundzade”. In 2014, under the leadership of the organization, Sheki hosted the painters’ exhibitions and a national fashion show of Turkish-speaking countries.⁵²

The opening ceremony for “the Turkic Capital of Culture in 2016” was held on April 28, 2016. It was organized in the Village of The Capital of Culture, which was established in the garden of the Han Palace, located within the “Yukarı Baş” State History-Architecture Grove, which played an important role in making Sheki the Cultural Capital of the Turkic World. Artists from TÜRKSOY member countries took the stage and Azerbaijani craft and folk dance groups performed during the ceremony. The opening program also included TÜRKSOY Press Awards ceremony and 15 people received press awards, inspired by the Oguz Kagan Saga, under the theme of “United We Stand, Divided We Fall”.⁵³

Within the scope of the Cultural Capital project, Sheki carried out several programs throughout the year. One of the most important events included the Silk Road Sheki International Music Festival.

⁵¹ “2016 Türk Dünyası Kültür Başkenti: Şeki” (Turkic Capital of Culture in 2016: Sheki), TÜRKSOY, accessed September 1, 2019, <https://www.turksoy.org/tr/news/2015/11/26/2016-turk-dunyasi-kultur-baskenti-seki>.

⁵² Elshan İzzetgil, 2016 *Türk Dünyası Kültür Başkenti: Şeki* [“Turkic Capital of Culture in 2016: Sheki”], in *Türk Dünyası Kültür Başkentleri [The Cultural Capitals of the Turkish World]*, ed. F.Yıldız (Ankara: Nobel Yay., 2020), 249-290.

⁵³ “Turkic Capital of Culture in 2016: Sheki”, TÜRKSOY.

The most important feature of the Silk Road Sheki International Music Festival is that concerts and performances are held outdoors, within the historical architectural monuments, which are located in one of the old and beautiful corners of Azerbaijan. The festival began on 27 June 2016, with a concert given by TURKSOY Folk Instruments Orchestra. The Sheki International Theatre Festival was held between 15-24 September 2016. Sheki also hosted the 5th Board Meeting of the Directors of Theatres from TURKSOY member countries during the festival. Therefore, the festival reached a large audience, especially with the attendance of theatre directors from the Turkic world involved in the program. The opening program for the festival began on September 15, 2016 by the Azerbaijan state academic drama theatre with the play "The Dead" by Celil Mammadkuluzade, the famous writer of Azerbaijan. The audience had the opportunity to watch the plays performed by groups from different countries every day during the festival. "International Yusuf Khas Hajib Symposium" was organized by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, TURKSOY, the governorate of Sheki, International Foundation for Turkish Culture and Heritage and National Library of Azerbaijan on November 2, 2016. Leading scientists and opinion leaders from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Macedonia and Turkey attended the symposium to celebrate the 1000th anniversary of the birthday of Yusuf Khas Hajib.⁵⁴

The Capital of Culture project has made significant contributions to the city of Sheki. The project played an important role in the promotion of Sheki and its status as a world city, as well as benefiting the cultural harmony and integration of the Turkic world. Sheki Khan Palace and its surroundings were included in the UNESCO World Heritage List on 10 July 2019. The Sheki Capital of Culture project also played an important role during the Khan Palace's nomination process for the UNESCO World Heritage List and contributed to its promotion. According to Düsen Kaseinov, the Secretary-General of TURKSOY, Sheki's Capital of Culture program embraced both similarities and different colors. The scientific and artistic activities organized within the scope of the program were carried out in coordination with TÜRKSOY and Azerbaijan's

⁵⁴ Izzetgil, "Turkic Capital of Culture in 2016: Sheki", 266.

Ministry of Tourism. Sheki's rich culture was introduced together with its spirit that inspired civilizations and contributed to their historical heritage.⁵⁵

3.6. *Turkic Capital of Culture in 2017: Turkestan (Kazakhstan)*

Turkestan is considered a city with a high symbolic value for Turkish-speaking populations as the spiritual capital of the Turkic world due to the presence of the Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi, one of the spiritual leaders of the Turkic world. The city experienced and witnessed significant developments that contained important lessons both for the independent people of Kazakhstan and the Turkic people, as well as for Eurasian communities and all the peoples of the world. According to historical sources,⁵⁶ Turkestan was founded in the 4th century and was formerly known as "Yasi", where Khoja Ahmed Yasawi was born. The Mausoleum of Yasawi, Kazakhstan's first historical monument to be listed as one of the UNESCO's World Heritage Sites, is also one of the magnificent buildings located in the city. This monument was renovated by Turkey in 1993.⁵⁷

TURKSOY's 34th Permanent Council Meeting was held on 1 December 2016 under the coordination of Ebulfes Garayev, Azerbaijan's Minister of Civilization and Tourism. Following the unanimous decision of all the representatives attending the meeting, Turkestan was selected as the Cultural Capital of the Turkic World for 2017.⁵⁸

As the capital of culture, Turkestan has special importance due to the life and ideas of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi. The city of Turkistan includes both the hometown and tomb of the great spiritual leader, Khoja Ahmet Yasawi (1093-1166), who inspired the spiritual life of Turks for centuries. The city is still one of the most important

⁵⁵ "2017'nin Türk Dünyası Kültür Başkenti Seçilecek" (The Turkic Capital of Culture in 2017 will be selected), Anadolu Agency, accessed September 1, 2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/2017nin-turk-dunyasi-kultur-baskenti-seccilecek/696143>.

⁵⁶ Kanat Ydyrys, "2017 Türk Kültür Başkenti: Türkistan" ["Turkic Capital of Culture in 2017: Turkistan"], in *Türk Dünyası Kültür Başkentleri [The Cultural Capitals of the Turkish World]*, ed. F.Yıldız (Ankara: Nobel Yay., 2020), 291-344.

⁵⁷ "Türkistan Şehri 2017 Türk Dünyası Kültür Başkenti Seçildi" ("Turkestan received the title of Turkic Capital of Culture for 2017), The Union of Turkish World Municipalities, <http://www.tdbb.org.tr/?p=8337&lang=tr>.

⁵⁸ "Turkic Capital of Culture in 2017: Turkestan", TÜRKSOY, accessed September 1, 2019, <https://www.turksoy.org/tr/news/2017/01/24/2017-turk-dunyasi-kultur-baskenti-turkistan>

spiritual centers of the region today as it was in the past. The mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi attracts a large number of visitors. Approximately 1 million people visit the site annually, especially during the religious and national holidays.⁵⁹

As the Turkic Capital of Culture in 2017, Turkestan has further strengthened its position as the spiritual capital of the Turkish world by hosting several events including a grand opening and closing ceremonies, Turkic world dance festival, Newroz theatre festival, TURKSOY photographers' meeting, flying competition among Turkic poets, meeting of Turkic writers, TURKSOY opera days and joint meetings of the UNESCO National Commissions meetings among TURKSOY member countries. The program started with the Newroz festivities on March 21. Furthermore, TURKSOY's program also included music festivals, shows reflecting Central Asian culture, book fairs, culture and art festivals, panels, and various competitions. Turkestan hosted several cultural and scientific activities within the scope of the Capital of Culture activities to strengthen the bonds of friendship and brotherhood, foster unity and solidarity, and ensure cultural interaction. Turkestan enjoyed a successful process as the second Culture of Capital from Kazakhstan.⁶⁰

*3.7. Turkic World Capital of Culture in 2018: Kastamonu (Turkey)*⁶¹

Kastamonu has been an important city throughout history as a home to several civilizations, attracting and influencing them. Especially after the period of Candaroglu Principality, Turkic-Islamic culture deepened its roots in Kastamonu, and the city became a significant political and cultural center during the rule of the Ottoman Empire. Although the city was not occupied during the War of Independence, it provided great support to the National Independence Movement; and later on, continued its support of the Republic. In the following period, it became a center of attraction offering unique values including historical structures, natural wonders, spiritual climate, and local cuisine.

⁵⁹ Ydyrys, "Turkic Capital of Culture in 2017: Turkestan", 292.

⁶⁰ "Turkic Capital of Culture in 2017: Turkestan", TURKSOY.

⁶¹ Fırat Yaldız, "2018 Türk Dünyası Kültür Başkenti: Kastamonu" (Turkic Capital of Culture in 2018: Kastamonu), in *the Cultural Capitals of the Turkish World*, ed. F. Yaldız (Ankara: Nobel Yay., 2020), 345-392.

Kastamonu received the title of Turkic Capital of Culture for 2018 at the 35th meeting of the Permanent Council of the International Organization of Turkic Culture (TURKSOY) held in Turkestan, Kazakhstan, on December 5, 2017. It is the second city from Turkey that received this title after Eskişehir, which was the Turkic Capital of Culture in 2013. Even before Eskişehir, Istanbul's status as the European Capital of Culture in 2010 was important for Turkey as an opportunity to show its geographical and cultural richness. Kastamonu, as the seventh Turkic Capital of Culture in the Turkic World and the second in Turkey benefited from this experience while carrying out a relatively efficient and successful process in 2018.

Kastamonu's historical richness, geographical location, natural wonders, as well as its cultural, political and economic structures were considered as important opportunities for the Turkic World Cultural Capital process. More importantly, Kastamonu had established strong ties with the Turkic world long before 2018. These ties included an award ceremony, which gave the title of Honorary Citizen of Kastamonu to the important leaders of the Turkic World, and Kastamonu's Turkic World Days which were held since 1997.

Kastamonu carried out several activities in order to revive the local values of the city under the fields of tourism, infrastructure, culture and science. These activities benefited from Kastamonu's title as Turkic Capital of Culture and leveraged the relations established with the center. For example, the city officials had direct communication with the Prime Minister, Ministers and senior bureaucrats, and were able to receive financial support from the central budget for the development of the city.

In addition to the "local" activities classified under four categories, Kastamonu conducted further activities that contributed to the ties between Kastamonu and the Turkic world. In this context, important authors of the Turkic world are mentioned in various events. Due to the announcement of 2018 as the "Year of Chinghiz Aitmatov" by TURKSOY, several events were organized in Turkey (Ankara, Istanbul, Bolu, Afyon, etc.) and around the world (Japan, Azerbaijan, Macedonia, etc.). Two different events were held to celebrate Chinghiz Aitmatov's 90th birthday and commemorate the 10th anniversary of his death in 2018 in Kastamonu. The first event was organized by the Governorate of Kastamonu between 25-27

April 2018. The second was held on 26 December 2018 at Kastamonu University.

Kastamonu also hosted the activities for the 125th birthday of the famous Kazakh poet “Magcan Cumabay Memorial Year Opening Ceremony” and “TURKSOY Press Awards Ceremony” on February 16, 2018. At the end of the event, press awards were given to 14 members of the press from 10 countries who contributed to the promotion and enrichment of Turkic culture.

On June 29-30, a meeting on “The Role of Bar Associations and Lawyers in the Development of Inter-Country Relations” was organized jointly by the Turkish Bar Association and the Kastamonu Bar Association with the participation of the heads and directors of the lawyer organizations of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Mongolia and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

Kastamonu University also hosted several academic activities and scientific meetings with a strong international dimension, under the category of local activities, with high participation from the Turkic world. For example, it hosted “the Fourth International Congress of Turkic World Tourism” between July 19-21, 2018.

Through the activities held in 2018 in general, we can say that Kastamonu tried to establish a connection between Kastamonu and the rest of the Turkic world. This connection also focused on the promotion of the Turkic world and cultural values in Kastamonu rather than the representation and promotion of Kastamonu in the Turkic world.

Kastamonu’s term as the Turkic Capital of Culture provided a landmark that could unlock the potential of the city. In the forthcoming years, several activities can be carried out within Kastamonu, throughout Turkey and within the scope of the Turkic World to ensure the sustainability and growth of the process that started in 2018. Kastamonu can achieve its goals as the Cultural Capital of the Turkic World by ensuring the principle of sustainability.

3.8. Turkic Capital of Culture in 2019: Osh (Kyrgyzstan)

Osh is an ancient city that celebrated its 3000th anniversary in 2001. As the second-largest city in Kyrgyzstan, it is considered both as the

capital of the South, and the center of culture, art and tourism in the region.⁶² The city of Osh is located right next to Uzbekistan, south of the Fergana Valley, with Tajikistan to the southwest and China to the southeast. Located on the Great Silk Road, Osh city played an important role as the center of commerce, education, and culture.⁶³

Osh, which has become a modern city today, is one of the cities that played a major role in the history of the Turkic world. There are many historical monuments in and around the city of Osh. Located right in the center of the city, Mount Suleiman is listed in UNESCO's world heritage sites.

As of 2019, Kyrgyzstan has a population of 6,389,500 people. Of these, 73.5% are Kyrgyz, 14.7% are Uzbeks, and 5.5% are Russian and other nationalities (Uighur, Dungan, Kazakh, Tatar, Azeri, etc.). The most densely populated areas in Kyrgyzstan are Osh and Chiy regions (45-46 people/m²). The population of Osh city is 288,800. This number constitutes 4.5% of the country's population. 50.1% are Kyrgyz, 43.4% are Uzbek and 6.5% are of other nationalities.⁶⁴

The city was selected as the Turkic Capital of Culture during the 36th Meeting of TURKSOY's Permanent Council held in Kastamonu, The opening ceremony was held at Ahmatbek Waterbayev Stadium on 20 April 2019 in Osh. Participants included the president of Kyrgyzstan, ministers of TURKSOY member countries, lawmakers, diplomatic mission representatives, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Organization of Turkic Culture (TURKSOY) and the Islamic Education, Science and Culture Organization (ISESCO) and 250 artists from more than 12 countries.⁶⁵

The selection of Osh as the meeting point of the Turkic World during 2019 and as the Capital of Culture is of great importance

⁶² "Turkic Capital of Culture: Osh", TÜRKSAM, accessed September 1, 2019, <http://turksam.org/turk-dunyasi-kultur-baskenti-os>.

⁶³ "Turkic Capital of Culture: Osh", TÜRKSAM.

⁶⁴ Zuhra Amerakulovna Altymyshova and Raziya Abdiyeva, "Turkic Capital of Culture in 2019: Osh", in *The Cultural Capitals of the Turkish World*, ed. F.Yıldız (Ankara: Nobel Yay., 2020), 393-436.

⁶⁵ " 'Oş - 2019 Türk Dünyası Kültür Başkenti' Muhteşem Törenle Kapılarını Açıyor" (" 'Osh - Turkic Capital of Culture in 2019, opens its Doors with a Magnificent Ceremony), TÜRKSOY, last modified April 16, 2019, <https://www.turksoy.org/tr/news/2019/04/16/os-2019-turk-dunyasi-kultur-baskenti-muhtesem-torenlerekapilarini-aciyor>.

for Kyrgyzstan and the Turkic World. Osh, as the 8th Capital of Culture in the Turkic World in 2019 will undoubtedly contribute to the development of the cooperation among the countries and communities of the Turkic World. Cultural activities held in Osh city in 2019 significantly contributed to the economy of city by welcoming visitors from all over the world. Activities throughout the year also contributed to the development of various fields such as tourism, culture, sports, art and city infrastructure.

3.9. Turkic Capital of Culture in 2020: Khiva (Uzbekistan)

The 6th Summit of the Cooperation Council of Turkic-Speaking Countries (Turkic Council), was held on 3 September 2018 in the city of Cholpon-Ata. The council members include Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey. Uzbekistan's President Shavkat Mirziyoyev attended the summit as a "guest of honor". During this meeting, Mirziyoyev announced Khiva, Uzbekistan, as a candidate in 2020 within the scope of the "Capital of Culture in the Turkic World" program.⁶⁶

Khiva, which was one of the most important trade markets in Central Asia in ancient times, is considered as one of the most beautiful ancient cities in the world. The city has a unique spatial-morphological structure that gives Khiva this feature.⁶⁷ The city consists of two parts. "Ichan Qal'a" (Inner city-castle) with its 8-meter high wall and the "Dishan Qal'a" (Outer city-castle) that surrounds it. Small settlements and villages can be found around them. As it is, the Khiva covers an area of 26 hectares.⁶⁸

The city of Khiva, considered the pearl of the Xorazm Region in western Uzbekistan, offers an open-air museum, where visitors can travel in time, history as they wander the narrow and labyrinthine streets. The "Ichan Qal'a" section of the Khiva has been restored in a way to ensure that it looks the same as it was a few centuries ago. It is in the list of the State Museums of Uzbekistan as an "open-

⁶⁶ "TÜRKSOY, 2020 'Türk Dünyası Kültür Başkenti' Adayı Hive'de" "TURKSOY is at Hive, the candidate for '2020 Turkic Capital of Culture", <https://www.turksoy.org/tr/news/2018/12/24/turksoy-2020-turk-dunyasi-kultur-baskenti-adayi-hive-de>.

⁶⁷ "Khiva Slave City Central Asia", accessed September 1, 2019, <https://sunriseodyssey.com/khiva-slave-city-central-asia>.

⁶⁸ "About Khiva, the World Heritage", Digital Silk Road Project, accessed September 1, 2019, <http://dsr.nii.ac.jp/khiva/en/01info.html>.

air city-museum". In addition, UNESCO recognized the city as a "World Heritage Site" in 1990.⁶⁹ These characteristics of the city as an open-air museum both nationally and internationally reflect its long history.

Khiva, the Cultural Capital of the Turkic World in 2020, is of particular importance in terms of the re-establishment of Uzbekistan's relations with the Turkic World. As the Turkic Capital of Culture, the city has the opportunity to benefit from the experiences of previous cities. As it can be seen from the previous experiences of Turkic Capitals of Culture, several factors play an important role in the success of this process. The most important factors include the regional identity of the city together with the historical and cultural values representing this identity, its unique historical and cultural elements, and natural values. Khiva has this potential along with its historical and Cultural Heritage elements and natural wonders inherited from Khwarazmian Empire and Khiva Khanate. In this sense, Khiva's selection as Turkic Capital of Culture in 2020 can be considered a sound decision.⁷⁰

On the other hand, the experiences also revealed that natural, cultural and historical heritages were not enough to guarantee. Critical factors also include a strong organizational structure to ensure that activities carried out in line with the previously planned timeline, good coordination among the institutions in the city, adequate budget, organization of a spectacular opening ceremony, and promotional activities; a wide range of activities and events, activities that will emphasize the importance of the city together with the cultural elements of Turkic world identity, coordination between the central government (Ministry of Culture), and local government (governorate, municipality, etc.), the strong commitment by the central government, especially the Ministry of Culture, and international cooperation. In this sense, it is expected that these factors will play an important role in ensuring the success of Khiva as the Turkic Capital of Culture in 2020.

⁶⁹ "Khiva- The City Museum", Malika Hotels, accessed September 1, 2019, <http://www.malika-khiva.com/khiva.htm>.

⁷⁰ Ayşe Çolpan Yıldız, "Turkic Capital of Culture in 2020: Hive", in *The Cultural Capitals of the Turkish World*, ed. F.Yıldız (Ankara: Nobel Yay., 2020), 437-484.

4. Conclusion

It is very important to differentiate cities according to their socio-political and economic goals. City branding relies on a city image specially designed for this purpose or assembled from existing elements and communication/marketing efforts. In this respect, the Turkic Capitals of Culture project fills an important gap in terms of presenting differences within the common cultural heritage.

The peculiar characteristics underlying the project also remind us not to address this issue with a narrow-minded and pragmatist approach. Visibility of the Turkic Capitals of Culture project should be increased and it should not be assessed only within the framework of economic cost, profit and loss when considering the scope and limitations of communication methods used for the promotion of Turkic cities and culture.

Besides the current communication efforts, it would be also useful to take the project to the next level in terms of communication. There are still actions to be taken to improve the branding of the project.⁷¹ It will be also beneficial to continuously update the communication channels and increase the interaction. It is necessary to move to a stage, where the basic communication strategy is not promotion, but value generation. In accordance with the above-mentioned goals, these communication efforts are to be implemented as soon as possible in Khiva, which was selected as the Turkic Capital of Culture in 2020.

Cultural Capitals of the Turkic World project offers rich opportunities for cities and cultures but it is still uncharted territory in terms of worldwide recognition. Undoubtedly, this can be a great advantage when the right communication channels are used. Long-term and effective communication plans can unlock the potential of this project as a project with worldwide recognition in the forthcoming years.

⁷¹ Erkam Temir, "Turkish World Cultural Capitals and Communication Strategies", in *the Cultural Capitals of the Turkic World*, ed. F.Yaldız (Ankara: Nobel Yay., 2020), 49-72.

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