Preface

The 49th Annual Meeting of the Permanent International Altaistics Conference (PIAC) with the central theme of "Man and Nature in the Altaic World" was held at the Johannisstift in Berlin-Spandau, July 30–August 4, 2006. It was organized by the Institute of Turkology, Freie Universität Berlin. The Meeting was made possible though the generous funding of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) for which I would like to express my deep gratitude. I also wish to thank Freie Universität Berlin for its financial help and organizational support before, during, and after the Meeting.

This volume contains, in their revised final form, 51 of the 73 papers given during the Meeting. In putting together the volume, the editors gave preference to those papers that dealt most closely with topics within the central theme. Since time immemorial, reflections on the relationship between man and nature in its material and metaphysical dimensions have formed part of the oral and written heritage of peoples. In Altaic Studies, research on this heritage is only in its beginnings. At the Annual Meeting of the PIAC in Berlin, scholars from twenty countries explored many aspects of the topic "Man and Nature", such as human existence faced with the forces of nature, the significance given to animal and plant life, landscape, celestial bodies, water and earth, climate and weather, but much research remains to be done. I wish to thank all participants for their presentations and contributions to the discussion. The interdisciplinary approach of the Meeting facilitated a fruitful exchange of ideas and materials among specialists from almost all branches of Altaic Studies – linguists, literary and religious historians, philologists, historians, and ethnologists.

This volume would not have materialized without the much-appreciated help given in a spirit of friendship by a number of people. First of all, I owe a special debt of thanks to the co-editors, Dr. Elena V. Boykova and Stud. Ass. Brigitte Heuer, whose expertise, patience, and accuracy were decisive in preparing the papers for publication. I am also grateful to Roswitha Lugauer and Dr. Kathrin Möller for their care in copy-editing a number of the English texts. I wish to thank Professor György Hazai for accepting this book into the series "Studien zur Sprache, Geschichte und Kultur der Türkvölker". Finally, I gratefully acknowledge the expertise and support of Gerd Winkelhane and Henrik Jeep of Klaus Schwarz Publishing House in taking charge of this publication.

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