

Nomadism as a way of life in the Kazakh literature and culture by the example of the modern Kazakh novels

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Abstract. Historical studies, concerning the issues of the past, has been trying to answer the burning questions of our time. The past helps us to draw a parallel between the past and the present and to understand reality more and more. Historical personalities, nomadic world, medieval towns are the major subjects touching upon in the modern writers' works. The aim of the article is to present the interpretation of the great scholar and philosopher Abu Nasr al-Farabi in the novels "The Returning of the Teacher" written by A. Alimzhanov and "Al-Farabi" written by D. Doszhanov.

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1. Introduction

In the present-day research studies there are debates about civilizations, their clashes and competitions. Speaking about civilization, it is necessary to mention "about the problems of general roots of the people, their historical past, traditions of political strike and statehood. ZH. D. Suleimenova, A.Tashagil and B. Amankulov write: "Each people, as well as each person has his own destiny and his own history. But the world history should keep in the memory the contribution of the people which has been brought in a world treasury, thereby, having enriched and having created a basis for the further development and prosperity of universal culture" [1]. The culture of Central Asia and Eurasia is based on the achievements and traditions to Turkic civilization.

C.V. Findley is defined the Turks as "a group of peoples definable by their languages and by certain shared elements of culture and history but otherwise astonishingly diverse among themselves." [2].

Chingiz Garasharly gives historical information about Turks: "The Turks, like their distant Indo-European, Semitic, Caucasian and other relatives were born in Western Asia and left Mesopotamia many thousands of years ago. According to the English scientists S.Lloyd and G.Child, the Turanians, who settled in the basin of the Tigris and Euphrates ten to twelve thousand years ago, moved to Asia. The same can be said about the Indo-Europeans and other Fore Asian peoples, who migrated to different parts of Eurasia, thereby giving rise to modern language families. Thus, the Turks who made up only part of the Turanian race settled in Central Asia cannot be considered Central Asians by blood. According to old sources, some Turanians who migrated Westward established the early Mediterranean civilization" [3, 4].

The Turkic world together with the Central Asia and Eurasia occupies one of leading places in a world historical and cultural heritage of mankind. The Turkic world is "like a bridge, which connected different civilization, cultures, folk... Here occurred interaction between turkic, iranian, slavonic, chinese, mongolian cultures. All this antiquities history developed multi ethnical history and culture of this area. And today Turkic world, and Kazakhstan in particular, have their unique which defined by these factor" [4].

Turkic identity is based on nomadism. Nomadic is "a way of life of nomads within their territories, and not vagrancy «in search of water and grass». Nomads' change of territories means well mastered environment which can occupy big spaces covering large geographical objects subdivided into micro zones of tribal groups, connected with microtoponyms of valleys, lakes, patrimonial natural boundaries and, etc." [5].

Indeed, C.V. Findley emphasizes, that "in Inner Asia, the Uzbeks and the Uyghurs have been sedentary for centuries, while the Kazakhs, Turks of southern Siberia, and Yakuts further east preserve nomadic traits most fully" [6]. Thus not all the peoples of Turkic civilizations were nomads.

C.V. Findley marks that "the nomadic lifestyle is typical for peoples of desert and steppe, Turks have also differed historically in their modes of adapting to their natural environment" [6] and writes: "The nearly continuous cover of grasses made the steppes historically into the zone of choice for pastoral nomadism, a mobile way of life based on animal husbandry and on seasonal migration by families with their flocks from pasture to pasture in an annual cycle" [6].

The ancestors of the modern Kazakh, ancient Turkic tribes, were people of a nomadic

civilization. They “have left a very important heritage to their present descendants: culture of the ecological relation to surrounding space, tradition of respect for the nature, space and its laws, ideas of harmony of the nature, society and the person” [7].

Throughout the centuries nomadism has been “a key aspect of culture in the Eurasian space, especially on the Kazakh steppes. The Russian colonization and the Soviet Union drastically transformed the Kazakh society in the 19th and 20th century. Since independence in 1991, the legacy of nomadism has been rehabilitated. The society has also participated in reconstructing symbols of the nomadic past” [8]. First of all, nomadism as an object of memory has been reflected in Kazakh literature.

R. Abazov points out: “The emergence of the modern Kazakh literary traditions should be taken in the historical and cultural context of literary development in Kazakhstan. The Kazakhs, like their neighbors, were nomads and thus over many centuries they developed an exceptionally rich body of folklore – heroic epics, lyrical songs and musical compositions (kui – in Kazakh), fables, and ritual songs. Traditionally, even the most important pieces of national folklore were never written down, but transmitted orally from generation to generation, from one place to another. This oral tradition was especially important, as written works could vanish in times of war or political calamities and were extremely difficult to preserve in a pastoral-nomadic way of life” [9]. From the point of view of influential Kazakh critic Murat Auezov “the Kazakh writers were striving to internalize the new world of cultural values” [10].

Speaking of the national style of the modern Kazakh literature we have to notice that in some works of fiction the images of outstanding personalities is often portrayed. Thus the image of al-Farabi is represented in such historical novels as “The Return of the Teacher” by A. Alimzhanov and “Farabi” by D. Doszhanov, devoting to a famous scientist and philosopher of the Islamic Golden Age.

For researchers Abu Nasr al-Farabi have been interested in the logical, metaphysical and political aspects. But A. Alimzhanov and D. Doszhanov have represented Al-Farabi as a nomad who had had “a great desire to understand the universe and humankind, and to know the latter’s place within the former, so as to reach a comprehensive intellectual picture of the world and of society” [11].

For A. Alimzhanov al-Farabi is a pilgrim, who is wandering along the roads with the caravans. Going on travels, he was not only receiving his native land’s culture and history but was learning the works by ancient Greeks and Israelites, philosophical

studies of Persians, Hindu and Arabs, ancient Chinese wise men’s treatises. The wandering beggar who was known nobody in the Middle Ages has summarized the ancient knowledge and has grounded new doctrine based on Wisdom.

D. Doszhanov’s Farabi is a very old man of eighty. His beard is as white as snow and he is wearing white clothes. Throughout the novel he is traveling in a cart with Saif’s troops. Pages where the author is describing Saif’s military campaign bear a resemblance to the history of Otrar which was narrated in another novel by Doszhanov named “Silk Road”.

The wanderer’s journey which is full of memories about the scientist’s discoveries is called by A. Alimzhanov as “reflection of Life truth”. The cultural originality of Alimzhanov’s work is largely based on traditions of oral oriental novels (dastans) about hero’s lives from myths and folk legends.

The novel’s composition is quite complicated. On the one hand, the narrative based on memories is covering the whole life of a scientist from childhood to old age. And at the same time events taking place in the novel are limited in time and space. But the author is narrating not only about the central character of the novel, he is recounting the other characters –Chaldean Hasan the slave, Arab Mahmud the scribe, Turkish warrior Sanzhar. A death of Sanzhar is one of the most vivid episodes of the novel.

The epigraph of the Alimzhanov’s work is Aristotle’s quotation: “The artistic representation of history is more rigorous and more true than a research itself. Poetic art penetrates deep into the heart, while a research is only bare facts of the matter.”

The principal character of Alimzhanov is travelling in search of knowledge. al-Farabi is convincing Banu that knowledge is the real happiness and it is throwing light upon a man’s life. The great scientist considered the knowledge not to be taken away and to be destroyed.

It is necessary to emphasize that education was one of the most important social phenomena in al-Farabi’s philosophical system. Al-Farabi considered the education to be concerned with the human soul. The whole activity of education, in al-Farabi’s view, can be summed up as the acquisition of values, knowledge and practical skills by the individual, within a particular period and a particular culture. The goal of education is to lead the individual to perfection since the human being was created for this purpose, and the goal of humanity’s existence in this world is to attain happiness, which is the highest perfection – the absolute good.

Truth of History, original thinking and unusual stylistic manner of A. Alimzhanov let us to conclude that the author has created the new line in the historical prose of Kazakhstan. Ancient civilizations, oriental culture and philosophy, disappeared towns, dead cultures are in the centre of Alimzhanov's attention. And the majestic figure of Farabi is raising above that.

"I will write about rulers and cities, about sovereigns and people. But this won't be a fairy tale. I shall tell only the truth – the truth everybody is afraid of and the truth nobody wants to touch upon," - al-Farabi says [12].

We see a high priest of science who is not separated from life, not an indifferent stranger that looks at the world from a height of cold categories of peripatetic logic. He is deeply rooted in his violent time, he is seeking the truth, because he hates the injustice and hypocrisy. His life was full both joys and trials: he loved the daughter of the ruler (caliph) and talked to outstanding scientists and poets, he suffered persecution and had to hide in the rocky steppes.

Al-Farabi in A. Alimzhanov's work is a seeker, a suffering and protesting personality, a zealot, who proclaimed the triumph of thought in the period of time when people lived without any idea of law, of God, as if they were in the prison night without a candle.

In the novel "The Return of the Teacher" the image of the way is extending throughout the narrative. The way as a symbolic code of a man's life is interpreted here in focus of Al-Farabi's influence on the culture's formation and the people's mentality. The way as user here is also represented in such works of Kazakh literature as "Abai's Way" by M. Auezov's, "Flashed Meteor" by S. Mukanov and others.

"The Return of the Teacher" is a philosophical novel but some scenes are written in lyrical context. For example the author's note concerning Al-Farabi's beloved: "Let her remain a great moment that has illuminated your youth with soft light. Let it forever remain in the heart as an aching pain, wistful longing for love, joy and warm gentle sadness" [12].

According to Doszhanov's conception, the purpose of Al-Farabi is "to understand the mystery of the world". This mystery is revealed through the Nature's image. Here is the view of the autumn landscape casting a gloom over Al-Farabi who is far away from his Homeland: "The wreaths of gray clouds were floating low above the land, in the gaps between them one could see the sky. These clouds were lying heavily on the ground, their view was quite depressive. the wet wind was blowing. The sad

and howling wolf's voice was heard far away. 'Autumn has come, – thought the old man. – Autumn has come again. Which one in my life? The last memory of the Muslim world – the kingdom of Syria, the only one in the desert, full of the hot sun and the sandstorms... Autumn has come here too. The ruler is also sad and depressed. No wonder... He was defeated for the first time in his life. He is travelling praying to all the ghosts ..." [12].

Whenever the old man was, the Homeland never left his heart. He cognized many long and short ways, "there were both sorrow and happiness in his life. Many long years were pressing him like a heavy stone. And the closer were the arms of the cold grave, the ardent his memories of the homeland were. He missed it day and night, he dreamed to glimpse his native land even from a distance".

Throughout the ages thinkers have raised the question of what the human being ought to learn in order to be in tune with his own epoch, to live intelligently in society, and to be a citizen bringing benefit both to himself and to the community. A. Alimzhanov is trying to answer the question of why Al-Farabi, an outstanding mathematician and astronomer, historian and philosopher, physician and musician, has been attracted the people in all periods of time: "The history of nations knows moments of great insight, when, having gone through the dark years and centuries of triumphs and victories, having known the might of fraternal unity with other peoples, having felt the light of knowledge and having become equal in the most perfect society of the century, people want to look at the past in other eyes for the sake of their firm friendship with other people and for sacrificing to all the people all their best ever created in the common history" [12].

Alimzhanov's and Doszhanov's literary works written in the genre of the historical novel, is based on myths and legends about Al-Farabi because there are little scientific sources retelling accurate facts about the scientist's real life. Interpretations of the writers in focus of revealing the inner life of their novels' main character are fully artistic representation that reflect the authors' masterly writing skills. The novels "Farabi" and "The Return of the Teacher" are not only the most prominent heritage to the aforesaid writers' creative works but an important milestone in the history of the entire Kazakh literature.

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