

CONCEPTS AND CATEGORIES OF KAZAKH PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

Until recent period the very existence of the term “Kazakh philosophy” was totally neglected. Kazakh philosophy is self-consciousness of the steppe culture which created its own imaginative world and its own spiritual culture. If philosophy is understood in its original meaning as love to wisdom and not only the knowledge of logical constructions then it is oral steppe reflection of the everyday existence of the nomads and those who created oral knowledge could be called nomadic philosophers. Kazakh philosophy is shaped by the history of the Kazakhs and their perception of life and their worldview reflects different periods of historical development through critical articulation of ethical and metaphysical views. Nomadic civilization is characterized by the syncretism of its worldview. The study of the history of the Kazakh, Turkic, and Islamic philosophy contributed to the development of the modern integral worldview objected to spiritual priorities.

Keywords: Kazakh philosoph

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It is well known that philosophy from its very beginning reflects the reality of the material world in the form of thought. And because the world is diverse and appears for a human being in its diversity, then its philosophical reflection is also manifold. Philosophy is capable of expressing and producing new worldview to help to create and develop man's social being. The diversity of philosophic systems is based on the relation: Man – all of Reality.

Philosophy represents the epoch and the people. According to Hegel, philosophy is the epoch grasped by the thought. Bertrand Russell wrote that in order to understand the epoch or nation, we should understand its philosophy. We should, to some extent, be philosophers ourselves. There is a clear connection: circumstances of life make people's philosophy and vice versa, their philosophy, to a great extent, makes these circumstances. (Russell, 1959)

Constant change of the generations either it happened in the East or in the West, among settled people or nomads –it was followed by philosophical contemplation. And everywhere philosophy reflected the forms of being of the people in space and time. The thoughts of previous generations became the source of thinking for their offspring. But the endless step made time and space sensed differently for nomads. The idea of unified time and space for a nomad gave perceiving time as unlimited in length a vaster notion connected to both past and future. This is one of the manifestations of perception of time through space and vice versa. This is another form of relation of Man – Reality. The reality of endless steppe gives a specific perception of time. The category of land is specific for a Kazakh. The land is holy, it unites all of us as integrity, and it gives us the sense of feeling and realizing our tie with the whole Universe. It grants us the ability to understand the idea of being a harmonious integrity of man and world. These kinds of relations formed the character of Kazakhs. (Nurlanova, 2000)

The sense of being the one with the native land forms a firm spiritual comfort in the life. It is difficult to over evaluate this spiritual state of a man caused by his sense of being the one with his native land. This relation to the land is expressed in the philosophy of life, in the work of the soul which demanded to overcome the everyday difficulties of life of a nomad. Contemplation as the way of organizing the relation to the world and with the world is the basis of Kazakh worldview. (Nurlanova, 1994)

Kazakhstan is situated on the crossroads of civilizations which made a great impact on the lives and thinking of Kazakhs. Located in the very centre of Eurasia, Kazakhstan became the meeting place of economic, social, and cultural changes both of the West and the East. The East-West dichotomy is accepted and proved by the social science. The civilization established

in the Steppe has absorbed characteristics of both East and West. That intersection of East and West brought into life a peculiar worldview and thinking of Kazakhs.

I. AN OUTLINE OF KAZAKH PHILOSOPHY PERIODS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF KAZAKH PHILOSOPHY

We distinguish between the following periods in the development of Kazakh philosophy:

- The period before the ninth century or so called philosophy of proto Kazakhs. At that period their philosophy had a strong shade of religion;
- Philosophy of Turkic peoples, so called “Golden Age;”
- Philosophy of the period of the Kazakh Khanates;
- Nineteenth century philosophy or the philosophy of Kazakh Enlightenment;
- The early twentieth century philosophy
- Kazakh Soviet philosophy
- Philosophy of the independent Kazakhstan. (Segizbayev O. 2001)

A) THE GOLDEN AGE PHILOSOPHY

The Golden Age of Kazakh philosophy begins with development of the Turkic people's philosophy. And the philosophers of the period are common to all the Turkic people-Anarys, Korkut, al-Farabi, Jusup Balasagun, Hodja Ahmet Yassaui. When expressing the views of Korkut it will be necessary here to mention the term “the steppe knowledge.” There are two notions in the history of Kazakhs which influenced both material and spiritual life of Kazakhs. They are: Great Steppe and Turkistan. (Kassymzhanov, A., 1998)

Korkut is an outstanding representative of the Kazakh steppe civilization. This term has recently been introduced by Omarov. (Omarov, Ye., 2005). However, there still exists another term to define that civilization “nomadic culture, nomadic civilization.”

The phenomenon of the Great Steppe so far it had existed had to emerge a special tradition or knowledge, which, because of the place it emerged, could be called “the steppe knowledge” (Kodar, 1998). This term is relevant in order to distinguish between the knowledge of the settled people and the one of the nomads because the roots of that of the farmers are based on written resources of material culture. As for the steppe knowledge, being unreal and non-

material it is very concrete so it cannot be referred to just folklore. It is evident that in the steppe knowledge there is nothing of mythology. It operates with legends and traditions rather than referring to the gods or angels. It may be connected to the discreet, singular character of the Steppe knowledge because it has no basis, centrifugal, anonymous and legendary (Kodar, Almaty, 1998). And the main characteristic of the steppe knowledge is its syncretism.

One of those legendary persons is Korkut. He is said to be “a Saint old man, who is neither alive, nor dead.” But Korkut was a real historical person. In nomadic gnosis that what brings the cult is real. Nawai, Abulghazi, Rashid-ad-Din wrote about him. In the Middle Ages legends about Korkut were known in the Asia Minor, and Caucasus. He is the central figure in Oguz epos: “The Book of My Grandpa Korkut.” This idea was explored and developed by philosopher of the twentieth century Magzhan Zhumabaev.

Abu Nasr Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Tarkhan ibn Awzalagh al-Farabi (former Farab is the present territory of Kazakhstan) was born in approximately ah 257/ad 870. He may rightly be acclaimed as one of the greatest of Islamic philosophers of all time. Al-Farabi was known to the Arabs as the ‘Second Master’ (after Aristotle), and with good reason. It is unfortunate that his name has been overshadowed by those of later philosophers such as Ibn Sina, for al-Farabi was one of the world’s great philosophers and much more original than many of his Islamic successors. A philosopher, logician and musician, he was also a major political scientist. The circumstances of his death are not clear: some accounts portray him dying naturally in Damascus while at least one holds that he was mugged and killed on the road from Damascus to Ascalon, having joined the Sufis.

Like for Aristotle, a human being was one of the objects of research for al-Farabi. Like Aristotle, al-Farabi thought that the end goal of life of a man was happiness. The true happiness is in knowledge, virtue and beauty. But not everyone is capable of reaching it. Because we have different capabilities: perception, imagination, ability to think happiness may be out of reach for us. A man who does not know what happiness is, who does not understand how to attain it, may choose a different path, rather than achieving absolute virtue he will get absolute evil, warns al-Farabi. Al-Farabi gave careful directions for being a good teacher or ruler. He described twelve characteristic features of a virtuous ruler of a virtuous city. In order to be happy you need the people around to be happy, too, otherwise your happiness is incomplete. He also listed the characteristics belonged to the citizens of the cities which were contrary to the virtuous ones.

Another philosopher to be mentioned of the period was Jusup Balassagun who lived in

the eleventh century. “Kutadgu Bilig” by Jusup Balassagun is one of the first written literary monuments of the aesthetical thought of the Turkic people. In the history of the mankind, almost without exception, every state, every empire, every social formation is reflected not only in their historical works and scientific treatises but also in great art works of oral and written character, that gives the future generations rather vivid and clear representation of the detailed picture about the life of the society and the people of the previous epoch. One of the central problems in aesthetics is known to be the problem of beauty. Democritus saw beauty in the order, symmetry and harmony of one part to the other. It must be noted here, that Jusup Balassagun’s views in relation to the beautiful coincide in many aspects with those of Aristotle and Confucius. Thus, according to Balassagun, the beautiful in man, the beautiful in his deeds exists not only in manifesting the individual but at the same time is in the social significance of the manifested. Therefore, from our point of view, Balassagun approaches the understanding and treatment of the beautiful as a social phenomenon, which makes it possible to speak about the social purposefulness of his aesthetic views.

Actually, one should bear in mind that in relation to the problem of human perfection Yusuf is firmly connected with theological views of his time that cannot be otherwise. In his opinion, the whole of human nature, and all the beautiful in man: his mind, his senses, etc. is the gift of God. But not all the beautiful, earthly is treated by Balassagun in this way. He mainly praises the earthly joy of life and the beauty of the real world, where man lives and works. The most beautiful for the poet seems to be the beauty of nature which is limitless and endless. And therefore he praises this beauty with great strength.

For him the most precious in the world is human being. God created not him but also the Sun and the Moon, and everything else in the world. So the end goal for human is to discharge all the responsibilities for the God that is the goal is to live the orderly life. For that reason four things will be necessary: fairness, wealth, wisdom, and gratification.

He says that any man may do a cloak of honor, but true nobility belongs to the man of wisdom and intellect, therefore your words will be an eye to the blind. This means that according to Jusup’s study, knowledge, the power of the word and the power of reason are more powerful than weapons. To prevent evil and fault it is necessary to be able to use this great power.

Another thinker of the Middle Ages is worth to mention here: a prominent thinker and prophet of the Kazakh lands - Hodja Akhmet Yassau. He got a special “status” in the development of philosophical and public thought because he introduced of the Sufi-Islamic

concept of God to the traditional outlook of the Kazakhs. To some extent he made a synthesis of Sufism and Tengriism.

The expansion of Islam into the steppe, where people worshipped Tengri was a difficult one. It was promoted by the Sufi teachings of Yassau. Sufism was “simplified” in its ritual and religious ceremonies and this played an important role in the nomadic culture and even to a certain extent met the requirements of nomadic lifestyle. This was spread by dervishes in the boundless spaces of steppe. In its most secluded places, it synthesized the main postulates of Islam with the traditions of public beliefs.

Moreover, this process was not unilateral, but really bi-lateral: the moral-spiritual essence of Islam found its response in the hearts and souls of nomads and was accepted by them; but, in its turn, the concrete historical entrance of Islam was complemented by elements of pre-Islamic religious practices: the cult of the ancestors spirit, the worship of graves and “holy places”, etc., that were very stable in the steppes of Central Asia. (Nyssanbayev, 2005)

According to Yassau, the aim of human life is to achieve the perfection. And in order to attain the perfection a man should be a Sufi, follow the idea of Almighty God, refuse the family, material wealth, and follow practices based on divine love. Sufis were individuals in search of communication with God through ascetic practices. Afterwards there was formed an order of followers of Ahmet Yassau. On the way to Allah there is an obstacle, human’s greediness, exceeding his simple needs. Therefore, asceticism is highly valued by him. A man who practices these rules will become spiritually purified, will ascend above everyday routine, will acquire the following traits of character: gratification, fairness, and other features of ideal man. Only then he will overcome *shari’at*, *tarikats* and will approach *hakikat*. It is difficult to get to *hakikat* (truth), but you have to try, for it is the duty of each Muslim to do it, says Yassau.

B) PHILOSOPHY OF THE KAZAKH KHANATES

During the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries the following three streams were developing: philosophy of *zhirau*, philosophy of *biy*, and the so called “*Zar zaman* philosophy”. The humanistic ideals of Yassau have found their continuation in the creative activity of prominent Kazakh akyns Asan Kaygy, Shalkiiz, Buhar-zhyrau. Moreover, due to the influence of Yassavi on the richest verbally-poetic heritage of Kazakh people, a tradition of religious-moral genre comprising poems, legends, dastans, among which are poets Zar-zaman “Girl Dariga”, “Zarkum”, “Muhammad Hanafiya” and others, were created and further developed. The Sufi traditions found their existence in Kazakh poetry.

Kazakh poetic tradition was a bright example of the worldview of the people. V. Radlov writes that Kazakhs were able to recite long improvisations in the form of poetry, the quality which distinguished them from their neighbors. And he adds that for that reason they may be called the Frenchmen of Western Asia. (Radlov, 1989) Kazakhs expressed their worldview and philosophy in the form of verses. These verses as part of Kazakh culture comprised their ethical, aesthetical, religious, scientific and political views. They were the spiritual heritage transferred from generation to generation in verbal form.

C) THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE KAZAKH ENLIGHTENMENT

The philosophy of the Kazakh Enlightenment was developed by Shokan Ualikhanov, Ybyray Altynsarin, Abay Kunanbaev. A philosopher and thinker to be mentioned in this period is Abay Kunanbaev, a 19th century poet and man of letters who launched Kazakh as a literary language and translated Russian works into Kazakh. Before Abay, Kazakhstan literature consisted chiefly of long verbal poems.

Abay was a great poet, musician, and translator, philosopher and a real son of his nation who was concerned about the life of his country. Abay was the first to enrich Kazakh poetry with philosophy. He discovered a new poetry, developing a synthesis of philosophical and artistic principles. With Abay, a new Kazakh poetry and philosophy was born in the steppe. His “Kara Sozder” is a masterpiece of poetic philosophical genre and Nurlanova compares his work with Montaigne’s. (Nurlanova, 1987).

Abai said that if he possessed any authority he would cut the tongue to anyone who would say that it was impossible to change a man. A human being could change only through knowledge and the aim of knowledge is achievement of truth (Abai. 2005).

II. THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY PHILOSOPHY

Philosophy of the early twentieth is represented by Alikhan Bukeyhanov, Ahmet Baytursynov, Mirzhakyp Dulatov, Magzhan Zhumabaev, Zhusipbek Aimautov, Gumar Karash, and Shakarim Kudayberdiev. “A man sees and perceives the truth not only with his eyes, but with the eye of his reason.” (Kudaiberdyuly, Shakarim, 1993). With these words Shakarim begins his work “Three Truths”.

The idea of God and nature, soul and reason were always disputable topics among the

philosophers. There were written piles of learned dissertations on these topics. It is relevant here to mention “Three Truths” written by Shakarim. This work is the result of thirty years of deep mental work and thinking. Shakarim studied works of Plato, Kant, and Schopenhauer. He knew Arabic, Persian, Russian and Chagatai languages and worked in the libraries of Istanbul and Paris. He continued the ideas of Islamic philosophy, too. He concluded in his work that there is a creator of everything, the soul exists and develops, and conscience is the characteristic of the soul. The life that we are living in is divided into two: material life and spiritual life (life after the death of body). And spiritual life is far more important than the material one just because it lasts for an infinite period of time and depends on the difference of evil (our faults) and good. That is the point which most of us do not take into account and end lives with mournful results. Some say that this life has no single creator, or even that it is created by itself, and others think that creator is one and that is Almighty God. Discovery of atoms became the reason of spreading of different thoughts. Shakarim studied the works of European philosophers: Gassendy, Descartes, Newton, Linney. After studying religious treasures of East and West, he said that idealistic and materialistic points of view are different on the idea of existence of God. “Uzhdan” is the property of soul.

Like Abay, Shakarim sees the only way of spiritual and moral purification the society through dissemination of Islam, but Islam which is adapted to the life of Kazakh society. This was the way many Kazakh thinkers thought because in their opinion the steppe is more close to the Islamic world rather than to the Western world based on Christianity. (Segizbayev, 1996)

Like Abay, Shakarim considered the problem of man in the centre of his philosophy. He thought that man and his being is the main problem of philosophy. Human being has two intentions-to satisfy his body and to enrich his spirit. Exploration of the mysteries of the world lead him to self-study because he, himself possess the ability of soul to get faith as the highest property of soul which enables him to learn the God’s soul. According to Shakarim one of the truths is faith, which acknowledges the existence of creator and the soul is immortal. He thought that the basis for a good life are honest work, conscientious reason and sincere heart.

CONCLUSION

Kazakh philosophy at last becomes the topic of investigation and research because it has not been properly studied yet. Never before has Kazakhs verbal traditional culture been investigated. Firstly, the steppe civilization left us no references in Kazakh. Secondly, the existing resources are in many other languages, except Kazakh. During one century Kazakh alphabet was changed three times. Thirdly, a few generations of the scientists who were capable of reading those papers were erased from existence by the Bolsheviks. And lastly, the ideological discrepancy between old minded philosophers and modernized ones is another obstacle.

We hope that this unexplored wisdom of the Steppe civilization, the proto civilization for the East and West will be studied and we will learn a lesson for the new paradigm of the Asian Community which for the moment has taken the responsibility and turn to promote human race to live further on our Globe.

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