

**ON THE EUROCENTRIC  
VIEWS OF EASTERN  
CULTURE****Introduction**

Kazakhstan has always played significant role in many integration projects and processes in the Eurasian space. Kazakhstan has organized OSCE Summit in Astana in 2010, World Traditional Religious Leaders Congresses, chaired Organization of Islamic cooperation, Organization of Shanghai Cooperation and CICA, held Turkic summits, and initiated Customs Union, CIS, Eurasian Economic Union. Even, the idea of creating of Eurasian Union undoubtedly belongs to Kazakhstan. Now Kazakhstan is a part of Eurasian Union. In this paper the Eurasianism and Eurasian Union is considered from the point of view of the opponents of this idea: Kazakh nationalists and Western skeptics.

The Crusades and journeys, the great geographical discoveries, invasion of newly discovered lands and cruel colonial wars – all this is ultimately embodied in the real historical deeds manifestations of the Eurocentric point of view. Europe, the West with their historic way of life, politics, religion, culture, art are a unique and unconditional value, opposed to the «wrong» and «underdeveloped» Eastern world.

According to the Eurocentric cultural conception, the development of the true values of science, art, philosophy, etc. occurs *only in Europe*. In explicit or implicit way is proclaimed the superiority of European nations and Western civilization over other peoples and civilizations in all spheres of life. Other cultures were perceived as either «underdeveloped» or as «barbaric.»

**Metogology**

Westernization was thought of as the foundation of all Western global projects. In the XX century Eurocentrism was criticized and they started to talk of the «decline of Europe» (O.Spengler), «exhaustion of the creative forces of Western culture» (P.Sorokin), about limitations of this approach (A.Toynbee). Today, the belief in the narrowness of Eurocentric ideas is almost universal and attempts are made to perceive the diversity of cultures, polycentricity in politics. The world becomes both uniform and varied, complementing the homogenization of economic relations, technological and sci-

entific production processes of differentiation in lifestyles, folk traditions and socio-cultural, ethnological, religious, spiritual and value pluralism.

To the middle of the XIX century is traced back the emergence of «Oriental Studies» as a phenomenon in the system of historical knowledge, reflecting the views of the West on the confronting «peculiar» world of the East. Position of cultural scholars, then living in technically and economically more developed European countries, exceeding Eastern both scientifically and intellectually, voluntarily and involuntarily contributed to the «Eurocentric» tendencies, which, naturally, was reflected in the formation of the approaches, methods and principles of the analysis of history and culture of Eastern countries, in the development of values and criteria for assessment of quality of social development progress, nature of culture evolution, philosophy, art history and architecture of the East.

True dialogue between civilizations implies that the East from object of transformation and improvement in the eyes of the West should become a participant of the discussion on improving relations in the world, but to do so he must take a step to learn the realities of the West. Perceiving the diversity of cultures naturally should gradually turn into reality and certainty of «unity», but not uniformity. It should be noted that the necessary process of unity does not exclude conflicts, as it makes its way through time and casual forms of real history, for which not dialogue is typical but binary and inconsistency.

The perception of the cultural heritage of the East is purely intellectual, with «unknown» layer of its spiritual meanings inherent in the majority of works of researchers-»Westerners», does not make sense because it does not coincide with an understanding of value criteria of the founders of oriental monuments and the traditions-keepers.

Almost all of the Post-Soviet states have suffered a lot from the chaotic developments followed by the collapse of USSR such as deep economic crisis, break-up of natural economic relations and industrial ties, ethnic and social conflicts, crimes, migrations, instability, deficit of necessary foods and products, poverty, psychological disorientation and spiritual vacuum and so on. Despite of above-mentioned negative effects of that early period of independence of Kazakhstan, Nazarbayev could see the opportunities, necessary for CIS countries' economic integration and structural integrity.

Nazarbayev had predicted in that period of uncertainty that the centrifugal forces will, in the end, be replaced by the centripetal ones. He was

right, USSR existed no more, but, Moscow had still have a potential. In his book «*At the crossroad of the centuries*», published in 1996, Nazarbayev writes that, in that difficult period of time, in the early 90's nobody could imagine that it is possible to preserve and strengthen the national independence of country, and at the same time to take part in integration projects in the frame of Post-Soviet states. Since that time nothing important has been changed in the mind of the author of Eurasian Union project. If one looks profoundly into the evolution of Nazarbayev's political ideas, it is easy to see that from the beginning he has been carrying, cherishing and having the idea of Eurasian Union on his agenda as an alternative for other geo-political scenarios developed by Washington or Beijing concerning the future of post-Soviet, especially, Central Asia region.

According to Nazarbayev, in the early period, no one could believe, or even, imagine that one can combine his national sovereignty with re-integration process with some of the Post-Soviet states. In other words, traces of old great sub-national and sub-regional structures, interstate and interregional ties and links could not disappear so quickly and easily in a few decades. Disintegrated parts of USSR could not be seen as just its remains or ruins, and thus could not be forgotten forever, since, it was once so global and overwhelming phenomenon.

According to Eurasianists, one has to give a second chance for Eurasian integration, if, the intentions and aims are defensive and humanistic, not offensive and aggressive. The fatal mistakes, miscalculations and lessons from the Soviet era might be taken into consideration, equal rights of the nations throughout the Eurasia must be respected, national interests of the participant states ought to be paid attention to, if, the strategists and ideologists of Eurasianism want to create sustainable, strong, dynamic and attractive power of united Eurasian Union.

Starting the wide colonial expansion, extrovert bourgeois Europe with its imperial outlook of civilizational superiority and the «white man's burden» suitably qualified introvert east as backward, uncivilized and stagnant. From the point of view of European rationalism African-Asians are lazy and unadventurous. Outbreaks of the national liberation movement of the conquered and seemingly docile «natives» of the stagnant East were perceived as a manifestation of the «Eastern slyness.»

In the European social opinion in the colonial era was gradually formed such a Eurocentric view of

the world, in which a dynamic, creative, free Europe performs a «civilizing» mission in relation to the stagnant, despotic, fanatical East. «The imperialist historiography» the servant and steersman of colonialism in foreign civilization waters, explained the history and specifics of the East through the prism of European categories and stages of development.

For example, U.Hanter, G.Risli and other scientists announced the indigenous people of India inert, incapable of independent historical development; progress in any area was attributed to the white, «Aryan» race, which brought civilization, advanced forms of social relations, statehood, life-affirming religion, etc. Development of India was usually associated with the waves of conquest from the West. The reader was thus encouraged to conclude that the British invasion was inevitable and progressive phenomenon – not for some socio-historical reasons but due to racial factors.

In recent time Eurocentrism helps to justify metropolitan opposition to the national liberation movement in the colonies, supposedly «incapable» by virtue of their general backwardness of self-government and independence. In the post-colonial period Eurocentrism prevents spiritual decolonization of developing countries and contributes to the imposition of Western models of development without taking into account their civilization specifics, which can be beneficial to the West, but also leads to negative consequences for the East.

Manifestations of Eurocentrism in historical science are:

- imposition on the East of development laws, stages and categories of Europe;
- belittling the contribution and role of the East in the history of mankind;
- mythologizing eastern specifics.

The consequences of this approach may be:

- distorted understanding of the eastern history and society;
- reciprocal cultural and civilizational response of the East to the arrogant West (anti-racist racism, etc.);
- the difficulty of establishing the East-West dialogue and slowing down the process of the formation of unified world community.

The cult of individual with its usual amount of rights recognized by the state and protected by the international community, defines the Western social order, where the demand for sovereign individual is extremely visible today. The individual is in the area of multi-level relationships, both national and

transnational. But in the East the idea of wholeness and unity has always been important and of not individuality and singularity.

The tradition of realizing oneself as a citizen, which appeared in Europe in ancient times, has created a holistic view of the individual. Citizen of the Greek polis and citizen of Rome, these concepts included the conception of man, endowed with rights and freedoms, of dignity of the person as a social being.

As for the Eastern society, the foundation of Chinese society, for example, was the family and the dynasty. Today, therefore, we can talk about the existence of a peculiar Chinese civilization, which feature is determined by continuous existence of Chinese statehood, common rituals, a single official language.

The idea of morality is dominant in the hierarchy of Muslims values. Human dignity, honor and reputation, good opinion of others, loyalty to family, its traditions are primary, personal interests are secondary, the origin, belonging to a particular family, clan determine the social status of the person.

Throughout the Indian history morality is closely linked to religion. Faith contains a powerful moral charge, since, firstly, people submit their behavior to the will of more perfect beings (the belief which is the essence of religion), i.e. accustom themselves to obedience; secondly, by their own actions, appearance and inner capabilities they try to resemble these beings and change to some extent.

The creation and distribution of script was an important merit of the peoples of the ancient East to the human civilization. Active and extensive contacts of the ancient Greeks and then the Romans with the peoples of the East had unconditional influence on the development of the Greek and Roman cultures. Thanks to those long-term relationships Greeks and Romans well knew the oriental science, culture and mythology, particularly the Egyptian myths about divine creators of language and script (letters), about the patrons of letters and numbers. They took some of the characters from the eastern mythological systems into their pantheons of gods.

Arabic script appeared before adopting Islam. The formation of Arabic linguistics and its achievement in a relatively short time of a high level of development was due to the historical conditions which led to the rapid rise of the Arab people. In 632 was founded a military-theocratic state – Arab Caliphate, the boundaries of which quickly expanded as a result of the victorious march of the Arabs, who won a vast territory in the Near and Middle East,

including a large part of India, the Caucasus, North Africa and Spain. In the process of the development of Arabic culture embraced many different ethnic groups. Along with Islam Arabic language was spread, which took on the role of language of religion, government, education and science.

Perfection and a clear methodological orientation of the system of linguistic knowledge created by the Arabs in short time are explained by the fact that the Arabs were able to perceive creatively all they accumulated during previous centuries both from Hellenistic and Indian science, and the fact that they were able to penetrate deeply into the structure of their language, seriously enriching the language science with many important provisions. Arab language science greatly influenced the development of grammars and dictionaries of native languages and general linguistic theory throughout the Muslim world, on the formation of the Jewish linguistic tradition, on the formation and development of Arabic studies in Europe and, finally, the emergence of Turkic studies within the Arab tradition.

The Arabic linguistics (especially in the face of Muslim-Spanish science) was a mediator between the ancient science which achievements (particularly, many works of Aristotle) remained unknown in medieval Europe till XI-XII cc., and European scholastic logic. Under the influence of the Arab human and technical sciences in the universities of Western Europe became widespread Averroism as the Arabic version of Aristotelianism.

An important achievement of the Arabic linguistic thought was the recognition that the number of words is limited, and the amount of knowledge is infinite. A special place in the science of the Arab Caliphate held Mahmud ibn al-Husayn ibn Muhammad (Mahmud of Kashgar, XI cent.), the author of an outstanding bilingual «Dictionary of Turkic languages» with explanations in Arabic (which was compiled and edited from 1072 to 1083). The dictionary included vocabulary indicating its tribe, information about the resettlement of the Turkic tribes, their history, ethnography, folklore and poetry, the classification of Turkic languages, information on Turkic historical phonetics and grammar, the oldest Turkic world map. The author realized the differences in systems of Turkic and Arabic languages. In the dictionary included issues of interaction (contact) between the Turkic, Iranian and Arabic languages. It should be emphasized that Mahmud of Kashgar had no predecessors in the study of the Turkic languages. He insisted on the recognition of the equality of the Turkic languages with Arabic.

Particular interest in the problems of language in Iran was awakened during the reign of one of the Persian dynasties – the Sassanids (III-VII cc.). The Sassanids, who sought to strengthen their power, were interested in written fixing and codification of oral texts, which formed the collection of sacred books in two volumes under the title «Avesta». The ancient hymns in «Avesta» – ghats were attributed to Zoroaster. Zoroastrianism was given the status of an official religion, was proclaimed the cult of Avestan texts, which required the codification of the language of «Avesta». To record «Avesta» a script was used dating back to the Aramaic graphics and serving the Middle Persian language (in two script versions – Pahlavi and Manichaean), which in the Sassanid era functioned as a state language.

In Iran there was an active lexicographical work. Numerous dictionaries were created (Avestan-Middle Persian, Aramaic-Middle Persian, Sogdian, and Middle Persian). Dictionaries appeared for separate literary works or for individual authors, terminology dictionaries. The genre of explanatory dictionaries – farhangs – dominated (about two hundred, created over the centuries). An educational dictionary «Farhang-i pahlavik» was repeatedly rewritten. It had Middle Persian equivalents to Aramaic words, recorded in Heterograms. Addressees of the dictionary were Zoroastrians who did not adopt Islam after the Arab conquest and lost their language, which was by then already dead. The dictionary contained the Pahlavi translations and transcription. Subsequently the dictionary was expanded at the expense of translations into Tajik-Persian and Gujarati (for those who migrated to India). Nowadays, all previous translations are joined by one of the European languages. The dictionary totally contains about 1000 words, distributed over 31 topics. Early dictionaries were formed as a kind of encyclopedia on different areas of knowledge. Dictionary work in Persian material was continued in Muslim Persia (after the Arab conquest in the 7th century and the subsequent Islamization which prompted to switch to the Arabic script) as well as in the Iranian-speaking countries of Central Asia till the 14th century. – before the Mongol invasion, after the 14 centuries and even more so after 16 cent., after the campaigns of Babur, till the 18-19 centuries – in India, where Persian was in separate principalities an official literary language.

After the Arab conquest appeared many Arab-Persian dictionaries (often translated from Arabic), and – in the conditions of Minor Asia, where since the late 11th century ruled Seljuk Turks – Persian-Turkish dictionaries (especially numerous in the 15-

16 centuries, when Ottoman-Turkish language was formed).

In around XII centuries appeared annotated translations of the Koran – tafsirs showing significant development of lexicographic technique. Tafsirs included theological commentary examples on the living language. Under the Arab influence Iranian lexicographers also started to compile dictionaries of synonyms, dictionaries for reading poetry.

After the Islam settlement language philosophy flourished (al-Farabi and al-Gazalli who wrote in Arabic, who linked ancient philosophy and grammar and modern theories of language, developed interesting linguistic ideas in the mainstream of medieval Muslim scholastics).

Another distinctive and highly stable linguistic tradition of the Eastern world originated in ancient India. Like the Chinese linguistic tradition, but much more intensely, it affected the formation and development of linguistic thought in neighboring countries.

In the beginning of the 2nd millennium BC from the North-West to Iran and India came Indo-European tribes of the Aryans (Indo-Iranians). We know the Indo-Aryans as carriers of Vedic culture (middle of the 1st millennium BC – middle of the 1st millennium AD), which was captured in the orally transmitted religious texts – the Vedas (Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda, Atharvaveda).

The desire to preserve the purity of the language of religious ritual, known as Vedic was the basis for the revival of special interest in the problems of language. Priority was given to the study of the laws of melody, rhythm, metrics, phonetics (and this was later adopted by the representatives of Chinese culture when learning Buddhism), as well as elementary etimologization of words. Notable were the achievements of ancient Indians in the field of lexicography.

To them belong composed in Sanskrit extensive ritual and mythological treatises – Brahmins (8-7 centuries BC.), which set out the general program of ritual actions of priests and explanations of cited Vedic verses. Particularly high level of development was reached in grammar problems. Apex of grammatical thought and model for many imitations appeared the work «Ashtadhyaya» ('Eight books') Panini (5 or 4 BC.), which places the task of strict regulation and canonization of Sanskrit. We should note mainly theoretical orientation of Panini's work anticipating in its scientific level the achievements of modern formal logics, structural and generative linguistics.

Ancient Indians addressed the questions of philosophy of language, initially in mythological legends and religious texts, and then in the philosophical and grammatical works. They recognized language as supreme deity («Rigveda»).

European scientists got acquainted with Sanskrit and ideas of ancient Indian grammar in the late 18th – early 19th centuries which had a significant influence on the formation of comparative historical linguistics and its method. Founders of comparative method believed that the ancient Indian language was the ancestor of all Indo-European languages and that it possesses the highest perfection, lost in the development of language-descendants. Frequent recourse to concepts developed by ancient Indians, and especially the analysis procedures is also observed in modern European and American linguistics. It is often not without erroneous identification of the concepts put forward by the ancient Indian science, with similar concepts set out in the European linguistic tradition, without sufficient account of the differences in the ethno-cultural, general scientific and linguistic contexts.

Today, no other trend of social and political development is discussed so actively as identity. Identity or the way a person defines himself as the main subject of scientific discourse, a representative of a particular sex, ethnic group, group cultural community or the state, plays an important role in the modern world. The concept of identity is multifaceted, multidimensional and even ambivalent. At the same identity as the object of study in the culture system develops in several angles; scientists are explore its variants such as personal, social, civilizational, national, ethnic, cultural.

The theme of identity is topical both in western and eastern philosophical and cultural thought. Since man is a social, public being, then at the level of the first act of identity occurs man's realization of belonging to a particular social group, culture, ethnos or ethnic group, which determines his topological location in the socio-cultural and socio-political space and includes the possibility of orientation in it. The need to realize oneself in identity and to relate oneself to *others*, that is, to the world, to other agents, to some communities, due to the fact that each person needs a certain order in his life which he can only get in a community of his own kind. The duality of unity and disorder in relation to self-identity of the individual has been a major challenge of our time

Supporters of Eurocentrism spread the periodization of sociocultural history of Europe to

all areas of the globe. This leads to noticeable strains and distortions of the real historical and cultural development of the peoples of non-European countries.

Despite the declaration of the value of every society, every cultural tradition, the present situation in the world culture is more reminiscent of approval and promotion of the values of European culture. That is why we can talk about the so-called Westernization (Europeanization + Americanization) as an essential feature of today's global culture. Today we are witnessing the development stage of Eurocentrism to global scale, when in their essence and origin Western values, norms, and lifestyle begin to claim the role of human values. Aspiration to settle the European system of values, model of the state, etc. is combined with the economic, technological and military superiority, whereby Eurocentrism and Westernization pose a serious threat to world culture in general. The world is leveled under a single standard of Western lifestyle and Western values.

These processes can be contrasted with ethnocentrism (the term from Ethnology) – that «normal attitude» of any ethnic group when its values, traditions, norms are comprehended by its representatives as the only true and right. The disappearance of some cultural traditions sometimes causes in different ethnic cultures an active fierce rejection of European and American values. Values of «native» culture create «islands of stability» in the world of endless change and transformation. They provide guidance for meaning in life, are the basis of human mentality, restore and maintain the energy contour of a person, improve human creativity and enhance the vitality of the person, promote longevity and social activity.

Today, despite the acceleration of the dynamics of globalization march on the planet, the irreversibility of the integration processes, the influence of values of mass culture, traditions cause the aspiration of peoples to preserve their own national identity. It should be noted that the values of mass culture work on the surface; they

can change the outer form, but cannot penetrate and thoroughly shake the underlying worldview bases linked to centuries-old national traditions. In addition, while maintaining the diversity of cultures the global nature of modern civilization cannot be artificially stopped, it is subject to objective laws, and integration processes will inevitably make their way in conditions of variety.

### **Conclusion**

Humanitarian culture helps to overcome technicism and professional restrictions, opening the spiritual world of peoples cultures in all its diversity. This contributes to the development of cultural contacts between countries and peoples. This leads to the learning of other cultures, increases the interest in various forms of cultural life, leads to the cultural integration of nations. Cultural contacts help the revival of traditions, customs, art forms, crafts, games and competitions, national cuisine, preservation of historical antiquities and unique landscapes, traditional medicine. This encourages the maintenance of cultural identity as a national asset, the object of public veneration and pride. On this basis, historical, ethnographic, cultural studies develop, the search for the origin of the ethnic group, the preservation of language, improving the image of their culture. All this contributes to a peaceful interaction and mutual perception of the cultures of the peoples of the world. Fragmented world today finds unity in the diversity of cultures. Mankind has never before felt such need in dialogue, mutual understanding and communication, integration of cultural space, while preserving the identity and uniqueness of the historical heritage.

The future of human civilization much depends on the understanding and cooperation between the political and intellectual forces of the countries and peoples. Is necessary to develop and maintain a strategy of dialogue, intercultural communication, mutual enrichment of cultures.

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