

N.A. NAZARBAYEV



IN THE STREAM
OF HISTORY





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INTRODUCTION

When the July sun beats down on the undulating steppe nothing can be heard but the faint rustle of scorched grass. Every living thing moves into the shade and grows still, waiting for the blessed cool of the evening.

Suddenly, in the midst of this arid stillness the mercurial shadow of a golden eagle glides across the hilltops. Involuntarily, you look up into the dazzling sky and see a lone silhouette soaring in a slipstream high above in the cosmos. That proud bird soars in the rising currents of air, slowly surveying all the elements of heaven and earth that momentarily belong to her and her alone. But the deceptive languor is broken by a sudden plunge of hundreds of metres, to the misfortune of the target of this enchanted flight.

How many of these solitary dwellers of the sky have been devoured by time and nature? Nevertheless, for centuries on end this majestic breed has soared above the steppe, abandoning itself to chase and flight. How many wonderful and terrible scenes have passed beneath the gaze of those creatures – so indifferent to human sorrows and joys? From the blue distance of space and time one conjures up images of splendid ancient cities, recalled now only by half-ruined walls, and the legions of horsemen, the most terrible in the history of the past two thousand years, advancing over hundreds of kilometres and subjugating Eurasia. One imagines too, the calm breath of the *djailyau* and the notes of the nomad minstrel's song; the life of the steppe-dweller, full of labour and joys, victories and defeats. All this the eternal creation, so it seems, not of humankind but the Highest himself.

* * *

It is not coincidental that of millions of flesh-and-blood eagles, one symbolic bird has been rendered as a golden image against a background of the sky on the flag of Kazakhstan. Na-

ture, landscape and memory merge into this bold and sweeping symbol. Kazakhs in the stream of history..

If politicians responded only to the challenges of the modern world their task would be much simpler. The drama of those who engage in politics consists of the fact that history influences their every deed and utterance, be these destructive or creative. In the political arena it does not matter whether the actor himself is conscious or not of this fact. What is important is the continual presence of this unseen force, now transparent, now obscure, within the realm of strictly practical and immediate activity.

My exploration of the past is governed by an awareness of the legacy of history and its impact on the events of today.

This is especially relevant where multicultural societies are concerned. Here I employ a clear, if somewhat mechanistic argument. We are building a multi-ethnic state with equal rights and opportunities for all. The president of the country, as guarantor of the constitution, takes responsibility for all the 130 different nationalities and peoples of Kazakhstan.

At the same time, as a Kazakh, I must explore all five centuries of our history, starting from the moment of creation of the Kazakh state. Besides this, I must not forget the historical cradle of all the Turkic peoples – the Turkic kaganate, and this necessitates looking back over 1500 years.

The President is personally responsible for the survival of his nation. It must not vanish during the course of the next 100-200 years, as has happened in this century with many Turkic peoples of the Altai, but must instead flourish and occupy a worthy place among the world's family of nations.

The task consists of this, to be able to "inscribe" our huge body of national culture onto the next sharp bend in the road of history. At the same time, movement along this broad and dynamic "modern highway" does not permit the employment of archaic methods. Otherwise in the search for the past we may

lose the sense of the future. This dilemma is not as simple as it may seem at first glance.

It is impossible even to comprehend this dilemma without a clear understanding of history. This is the impetus behind my reference to the fundamental lessons of the past.

The simple and eternal questions – who are we, where do we come from and where are we going in the at times mystically foggy and at times blindingly apparent course of history? These are the eternal questions faced by every people and perhaps only their author could answer them with exhaustive clarity. The historian or the writer carries this inhuman task on his shoulders, always running the risk of remaining in the memory of succeeding generations as a naive dreamer.

Why does the politician take on such a burdensome task? As the saying goes, “What is Hecuba to him?” The task is a heavy one, but absolutely necessary. For history, not as archaeological exploration but as a means of understanding the present day, always produces a capricious fruit named “politics”. Now, a few hundred days before the start of the third millennium, our most pressing questions are: of what does our national identity consist, which is the optimal cultural model for modern Kazakhstan, and what are the ties that bind together our national consciousness, that will preserve our nationhood in this rapidly changing world? These are all questions that concern our political reality, but the answers lie not only in the present day but also in the dark and translucent waters of history.

The destiny of the last nomadic land in central Eurasia, national self-awareness and the secrets of the graves of our seven ancestors, totalitarianism and the great ruler Beibars, the Diaspora of modern Kazakhstan and medieval India, national consolidation and Alash – all these elements are intricately woven into the history of our great people, bestowing strength in these uncertain times.



THE PRESERVATION
OF OUR NATIONAL
IDENTITY

*Take a look at yourself
And think on this:
Who are you?
Where are you,
And where are you going?*

Omar Khayyam

The naïve era of “national planning project” has passed. Not only because this was a twentieth-century totalitarian violation of history, but also because we understand the fundamental fact that a nation is a living organism governed by socio-biological and cultural limitations. The cultivation of nations like mushrooms is not only useless but also impossible. Furthermore, the uniqueness of each nation often lies beyond the remit of general recipes. The famous saying, that “what is good for one is fatal for another”, implies a healthy national scepticism of universal recipes.

It is of course necessary, however, to have an understanding of the general trends that govern the national sphere. Without this it is impossible to define the overall logic of state development.

* * *

This explains why this book devotes so much attention to the question of cultural strategy. For the basis of our national state political system is the question of our own self-understanding.

We must recognise that internal heterogeneity, on the one hand, and external influences on the other, contribute to the fact that the cultural whole of the Kazakh nation is far from ideal.

If we procrastinate then the force of history will tear us apart. The different “cultural islands” within the Kazakh nation will gravitate towards other centres. One must not underestimate the significance of this problem. Insofar as my task is not to make a culturological¹ analysis of the situation – that is much better undertaken by professionals – I would like to put forward the observations of a politician.

¹ In countries of the former Soviet Union culturology is defined as an integral study of human culture systems and their influence on human behavior. While there are differences, it may be compared to the Western discipline of cultural studies.

When we speak about different cultural influences, regardless of their positive or negative effects, we place ourselves in the position of passive consumer. There are global imperatives, but besides these there are our own national goals. And for a politician this is a very important distinction. Which is more important – to bow to global circumstances or realise our own core strategic goals?

The question of cultural influence is posed incorrectly, but unfortunately many intellectuals, not only those in Kazakhstan, formulate it thus, as a question of “shattered consciousness”. They counterpose the current state of the Kazakh national consciousness to the imperatives of circumstance, that is, to the internal and external pressures on this consciousness. But this is to lose sight of the principal quality of national consciousness – its capacity for development.

This fluidity of the national consciousness raises several questions for the practical politician. Here at least three complex problems arise.

First, which developmental scenario of events corresponds to the strategic national interest? Second, what other variants of the developmental situation exist within the historical process? Third, how realistic is the attainment of the desired variant?

Hence the correctly formulated question takes a different form: “How to achieve the preservation and development of Kazakh national identity under real and actual conditions?” Of course, this is an extremely far-reaching task. But what is scale when we are talking about the threat to the nation and state posed by the “the stream of history”? To joke or err in this respect would be inadmissible. The questions themselves must be adequate to meet these dangers. As the ancients said: “Hic Rhodus, hic saltus!”

* * *

For Kazakh humanitarians there is no more pressing task today than to pave the way towards this vast field of interaction between national identity and the dynamic imperative of time. This is not only a political problem but also a scientific one. And because it anticipates the work of experts the task for a politician is thankless. I shall try to outline the nature of the problem we face, not only on a theoretical level but also at that of concrete decision-making.

Today we encounter the fullest eclecticism when trying to understand the position of the Kazakh nation in the modern world. Attempts are being made to construct a global theory, the goal of which is the search for Kazakh identity within the context of global tendencies.

Such global changes as post-industrial society, the clashes of civilisations, the success of liberalism and the advance of neo-conservatism beyond historical and geographical limits all impact directly onto the Kazakh nation. As though we had no more important problem facing us today than neoconservatism! In other words there is an unnecessary and uncritical broadening of the problem of the arena of the Kazakh nation.

On the other hand, there are the even more widespread attempts to use beautiful but antiquated ideologies to immerse Kazakh history in its own autonomous world. An analysis of Kazakh problems, especially Kazakh ethnicity, through the prism of the norms and values of nomadic society is an inadmissible narrowing of the field in question – that of the Kazakh nation. For even if we set aside the calls of modernity, then the Kazakh nation itself was never secluded or isolated. By the will of heaven and fate it was exposed to different influences but was none the less able to preserve a sense of nationhood, which was by no means reduced only to nomadism and traditionalism. Those who eulo-

gise traditionalism forget history's insidious trait: that these very traditions themselves once upon a time emerged as unpleasant innovations...

* * *

In order to remain in "the realm of reality", it is necessary to avoid both a too broad and a too localised image of Kazakh history and our present-day situation.

And here there are at least two approaches, the first of which concerns our history. Modern approaches tend to divide national history into eras of traditional nomadic society, its absorption into the Russian empire, the Soviet period and, finally, the Kazakh nation under conditions of independence.

Unfortunately, simplicity does not always correspond with the truth. Can we reduce the first historical period to nomadism? Today we need to ask much broader questions. The existence of a developed system of urban settlement on the territory of Kazakhstan in the period of deep antiquity, at the time of the ethno-genesis of the Kazakh nation itself, suggests that such a discussion of our past is overly simplistic. What is more, the whole region has a tradition of a settled way of life. Finally, over the past ten years the discussion of nomadism has become much more complex. Therefore, for an evaluation of Kazakh history in this prolonged period of ethnic existence we have to reject a whole mass of stereotypes. We need to form an understanding of those traits of traditional Kazakh society that have become ingrained upon the contemporary face of the nation. We also have to examine the specifics of these centuries-old influences.

A radical rethink demands a questioning of the aforementioned colonial and Soviet periods of Kazakh national existence. The issue here is not a reassertion of such self-evident and banal truths as that tsarist Russia was the prison of its peoples, or that

the USSR was not exactly a paradise. The question is different. Here we consider the genetic resemblance of these periods of national history. Changes in social structures in many ways reinforced already existing tendencies, accelerating this process of the destruction of national culture and the national system as a whole on an impressive scale of totalitarian aggrandisement.

For the understanding of the special functioning of the Kazakh nation as a continuous ethno-social system, it is more important to grasp the principles of imperial and Soviet colonisation than to focus attention on their main differences.

Of course, at the beginning of this century the short period following the February revolution appeared to offer Kazakhstan the historical possibility of a change in relations with the metropolis. But, as is well known, that period came to an end in October. There is no need to idealise that or any other period. Here, as in other instances, the discussion centres on the typical range of means of military, economic and cultural subjugation of Kazakh territory. Furthermore, many tendencies which were established in the nineteenth century had their logical conclusion in the twentieth.

Research and methodological considerations mean that an assessment of our national history will, of course, be based on the former scheme. However, the understanding of the unity of the entire period of colonialism, of all the various mechanisms and historical conditions, must elucidate much about the fate of Kazakh ethnicity. For these memory traces of the most recent past are especially significant and directly affect Kazakh behaviour, characteristics, outlook and world-view.

Finally, the past decade of our national history- the years in which we have regained the statehood lost a century ago- has its own internal logic, and has left its already indelible marks on the national consciousness. Besides, new laws and economic and political innovations in this period have resulted in deep changes

to the nation's psychology and a realisation of its place in history. The effect of these psychological changes has yet to be fully evaluated. It would be wishful thinking to paint all of these in a positive light.

But within the whole orientation of these psychological changes there is an obvious positive – the Kazakhs have received a sound psychological basis for the examination of their nation as an independent subject within global history. The loss of a sense of the historical perspective over centuries broke and deformed the national character, forcing its brilliant sons and leaders to struggle within the noose of history, when physical survival of the ethnic group demanded submission to historical compromise. In the last decade of the twentieth century the Kazakhs once again breathe fully as a free nation.

* * *

The realistic approach also requires an accurate evaluation of our own cultural influence on the Kazakh steppe.

Two centuries of cultural "vaccination" have produced a distorted picture of the cultural dialogue between the steppe and the surrounding world. As if the Kazakhs were only a part of some cultural peninsula, lapped by oceans of ignorance to the south, east and south-west, and the entire history of the cultural development of the steppe were that of the gradual diffusion of cultural innovation from the north to the south.

This false image has long been superseded on a global and continental scale, and to nourish a similar judgement today is simply *mauvais ton* on the part of any civilised scientist or politician. But, as far as Kazakhstan is concerned, there still remain some recidivist proponents of this cultural theory and, what is most astonishing, these include some local political theorists. At

times you can hear these demagogues cry that everything is at an end now we are torn from our cultural metropolis.

My relation to the incontestably great Russian culture and its legacy for the Kazakhs is well known. And I do not subscribe to the turncoat view of those who only yesterday wrote weighty tomes on the greatness of Russian literature and today dismiss all that comes from the north. These chameleons are no less repellent than *home-grown mankurts*².

We are speaking about something else. About the fact that the Kazakh steppe and towns were a crossroads of dialogue between the great cultures of the south and the east, the north and the west. And this remained true, from Beibars to Baburov, El-Tutmisha to Valikhanov. Kazakh culture, following the culture of our Turkic ancestors, was always syncretic and did not tend towards any single influence, however powerful. And so the search for a spiritual basis for our nationhood opens a wealth of possibilities and is driven by neither a junior officer's baton nor the subjective tastes of native demagogues.

Only an extremely poorly educated person would be ignorant of the fact that the Kazakh land was a territory of enormous cultural innovation on a pan-Eurasian scale – from military technology to construction and pastoralism, from the development of unique technology in the field of metallurgy to the giants of literature. All this could not have come about without multifaceted and prolonged contact with many different peoples and civilisations. Here on the dusty roads of medieval Kazakhstan walked the mystics of the Yassau school red-bearded Persian merchants bringing not only goods but also the transcendent love poems of Sa'adi and Rumi, the warriors of the great Genghis Khan and the officials of the Empire of Heaven ... all unaware of their place in eternity.

² From Turkic myth, a *mankurt* is a person who shuns his or her native language and culture.

How many cultural influences have melted into this land and how many has she given birth to herself? This question opens the door to intriguing discoveries and insights. But one fact is absolutely irrefutable: Kazakh culture is complex and multilayered with the deepest historical traditions. To understand what “Kazakh” is in the cultural sphere is to understand one of the most important facets of our national existence.

* * *

In its turn, an optimistic look at the future of the nation, at the possibility of preserving our nationhood, is not illusory. We have serious grounds for such optimism.

First, the “conservation” of the traditional way of life right up to the beginning of the twentieth century, regardless of all pressures and deformations, helped to preserve a powerful ethnocultural consciousness. In contrast to many peoples, our historical identity did not spill over on a subconscious level. Second, Kazakhs did not mix on a large scale with other ethnic groups. The assimilative model never prevailed, at least for Kazakhs on the territory of Kazakhstan. There are many reasons for this but here it is important to note that this factor played a distinct role in the development of national self-awareness. Third, the founding of our own state with all its attributes had a powerful psychological impact and led to a radical change in the sense of self-worth and self-understanding of the Kazakh nation. Fourth, the strength of the youth and our young demographic structure give the Kazakhs a good store of “ethnic energy”. Finally, in terms of pure numbers of people, the Kazakhs have “critical mass” for their successful survival and functioning as a fully-fledged nation in the modern world.

* * *

To pose the question in a more straightforward way and divert attention from specific external influences, then the field of national activity is defined by and composed of three factors.

It is first of all a mechanism for national integration and disintegration. Internal Kazakh disintegration was almost always a scourge of God or history, sharply limiting the potential for Kazakh statehood. Of course, the modern mechanism of disintegration is slightly different from obvious historical examples of which there are thousands in the popular memory. But here the historical reference to the centuries-old Kazakh affliction is less important than the statement of the fact that disintegrative tendencies and the fight against them are of key importance to national activity. The task of development of mechanisms, institutions and values for internal Kazakh integration is no less important than military construction or the building of institutes for external affairs.

Further, the basic ideological constructs on which Kazakh national consolidation is based are clear enough. They include the preservation and development of an independent statehood, the development and functioning of the Kazakh language as a state language and the territorial integrity of Kazakhstan. It is most surprising that, while in historical terms independence was gained only yesterday, the level of everyday consciousness is as high as if this independence had been won several centuries ago. Each and every Kazakh must understand that the territorial integrity of Kazakhstan and the establishment of real economic, military and informational independence demand the strength and effort of the entire nation.

Finally, in the practical sense it is clear that the political idea cannot just hang in the air. It is necessary to have a clear understanding of the driving forces within the Kazakh nation and their role and function in the process of this national construction. I

have already spoken about the role of the Kazakh intelligentsia in the creation of the national spirit. And this concerns not only the creative and scientific intelligentsia.

Before our eyes stands a great historical example of service to national integration by a whole constellation of historical figures, statesmen in the truest sense of the word, who already at the beginning of the twentieth century had formulated a goal of the development of the Kazakh state. Our history should be judged not so much by conquests, especially in this century, as by the degree to which the national spirit has been able to manifest itself.

We can state with pride that the national plan outlined by the statesmen of Alash³ at the beginning of this century has attained full implementation by its end.

* * *

The trials of Job have become textbook examples of woes brought down upon the individual. In world literature or mythology it would perhaps be hard to find a whole people who, having been subjected to all possible troubles over the course of centuries, have not been broken but have stood firm and eventually created their own state.

If one regards Kazakh history not as the proverbial "flashes in the darkness" nor as idealised descriptions of the "civilised steppe", one is struck by the following: the terrible demographic blows of the eighteenth century, the collectivisation of the twentieth, the destruction of the state beneath the pressure of colonialism, the regular purging of the national elite, irreplaceable cultural losses, the marginalisation of a section of the Kazakh population, and the intellectual and emotional traumas of the

³ Alash was a Kazakh liberal nationalist party founded in the early twentieth century.

greatest Kazakhs in national history. In considering these one would imagine that they would result in psychological collapse and national destruction.

But it turned out otherwise. The Kazakhs – descendants of great civilisations – were able to carry their sense of national identity through all disaster and trauma. And not only carry it over, not only preserve it, but also fortify it.

Is this accidental? History only uses mystical and historical arguments when it lacks concrete and rational explanations. Here there is no need to turn to mysticism. The preservation of “Kazakh selfhood” is absolutely rational and stands on firm historical ground.

* * *

First, Kazakh ethnicity has been formed over centuries. It did not arrive on this soil in the wake of some sort of colonisation or conquest. Kazakh history is deep and vast. It is by no means limited to the temporary boundaries of the first Kazakh kaganate. This stability in history, the connection of the Kazakhs to their ethno-genetic territory plays a huge role in the different periods of our history. No power on this earth has been able to force the entire Kazakh nation from this land, whether in a demographic, migrational or cultural sense.

Behind us stand not only our forefathers going back to the seventh generation, but also those who brought the Kazakh way of steppe life to the shores of the Indus and the Nile, the Volga and the Don. This multifaceted and far-sighted historic spirit of the Kazakh has yet to be fully evaluated. Nevertheless, archetypal forms of this spirit have always exercised power on the broad popular consciousness.

Second, despite strong socio-cultural pressure, no one had been able to destroy the dynamic of national-cultural growth. In

Kazakh literature and music, folklore and art, now in the measured rhythms of the great poetic traditions, now in the laconic style of the musical coda, and sometimes in deep spiritual strivings, the specifics of the national consciousness were created, along with its semantic broadening. The cultural universe of the modern Kazakh is significantly deeper and wider than that of even our more advanced tribal ancestors of the early twentieth century. The national spirit lived on. It was often unnoticed beneath the conventional effusions of loyalty during the totalitarian era, but its energy was constantly at work and at times was able to break through the stupor of the era (such as the works of the gifted Kazakh historian E Bekmakhov).

Third, there is a high level of national identification among the Kazakhs. For long years the Kazakhs altered neither their beliefs nor their ethnic identity; the stability of Kazakh self-description and relation to their nation is truly astonishing. It is enough to remember the simple fact that for some periods we barely made up a third of the whole population of our territory – the lowest proportion of all the republics of the former Soviet Union. Even under these circumstances the majority of the Kazakhs never wavered in their choice of national identity. Therefore, I categorically disagree with our pessimists' claims about the dilution of Kazakh identity. The issue is one of the reinforcement of this identity, along with strengthening the ties between its fundamental and modern elements.

* * *

Some special qualities of the national consciousness can shed light on the mysterious and life-giving strength of the Kazakh consciousness. The spiritual world of the Kazakhs was formed largely under the influences of the oral poetic tradition. To a modern mind this poetic world might seem incredible, stretching for

thousands of kilometres and reaching far beyond the limits of a strictly artistic genre and emotional understanding. It contained a huge element of rationalism. The Kazakh poetic tradition has enormous cognitive potential, approaching a form of philosophy in verse.

Poetry on the Kazakh steppe was never the exclusive domain of steppe singers; it penetrated every part of the Kazakh cultural body.

The great role of the oral tradition is of prime importance for the understanding of Kazakhs as an ethno-cultural whole. Not in the form of mundane speech at the level of everyday relations, but in the sense of creative and intellectual forms of human interaction. The resonance of our speech has become the living creative centre of Kazakhhood.

In this way a unique situation has arisen. Over the course of long centuries of spiritual existence the great majority of people, and not only the elite, were the creators of their own spiritual lives. This occurs only very rarely in world history. It was a genuinely democratic situation, exercising a fundamental influence on the formation of the specific attributes of the Kazakh language and culture.

From this arises the democratic nature of Kazakh literary expression, and its luminous quality of aphorism. From this comes the syncretism of the Kazakh language, unaffected by rigid laws of division according to work or professional specialisation.

Folklore, the popular oral art forms and their transmission and reworking by the great *akyns*⁴, as well as by thousands of unknown authors, played its educational role. It replaced the general absence of educational institutions. At the same time, the linguistic creativity of millions of Kazakhs fulfilled a function

⁴ Akyns are Kazakh folk poets and singers.

unnoticed at first glance. Through linguistic creation each Kazakh felt the “uniqueness” of his culture, his own selfhood and his inclusion in his poetic and harmonious native culture.

There are few peoples of this world who can boast that their shepherds speak the language of princes. With this, by the way, is connected one of the notable problems of translators from the Kazakh. They often ask Kazakh writers whether or not they have exaggerated the meaning. Not in the least. The Kazakh consciousness is such that any native Kazakh is capable of appraising the whole range of emotional expressions and hidden semantic depths of the Kazakh language. This is evidenced by their many millions of unique linguistic creations. This literary quality is the national style of expression of the Kazakh tongue. Can the Kazakh lose his sharp native panegyric weapons, capable of acting as shield and sword under any circumstance? Can he lose his talent for argument and philosophical meditation, his lyrical openness of expression, his laconic, broad, ironic and passionate “eternally new and ancient” tongue? Of course not. Over the course of centuries, the unique function of the language preserved the Kazakh nation as a cultural whole.

* * *

Another feature of Kazakh consciousness is its historic character. The people’s knowledge of history was unbelievably comprehensive. Even today, with the existence of sophisticated centres of learning, it is questionable whether the level of historical awareness in the general consciousness reaches that of past times.

From early childhood the ordinary nomad absorbed this system of historical knowledge into his psyche as a constant stream of historical and cultural events. The ordinary Kazakh steppe-

dweller had a panoramic historical awareness because from childhood his memory was trained to hold a wealth of orally transmitted knowledge. He could clearly visualise a succession of historical events. The people's understanding and knowledge of their history was born from their personal experience of it.

Ancestors and their deeds were envisaged as contemporaneous people and events. There was no great distance between events that took place centuries ago and those in the nomad's personal life. The individual consciousness of the steppe-dweller was of a thoroughly historical nature, so that he became firmly welded into the history of the Kazakh people. The nomad always perceived himself as an organic element in the whole history of his people.

Of course, in many ways this explains the static nature of nomadic society, the structural elements of its organisation and the architectonics of its social space. But the golden age of nomadic society cannot be compared to that of industrial societies, which exist in other coordinates of time and history. Classical nomadic society must be compared to others existing at the same points of history. And here we observe the fact that, whether we like it or not, during the period of their military-political hegemony over huge tracts of the Kazakh steppe, the huge mass of the nomadic peoples were at a higher level of understanding of their place in the scheme of history than the peoples of the surrounding areas.

* * *

We must stress this special quality of Kazakh consciousness, its openness to all that is new and out of the ordinary. The basis for this outlook is the daily life of each "traditional" individual on the steppe, which brings him into such a multiplicity of connec-

tions with nature and the other peoples of the vast wide-open spaces that it was often hard to find strict universal formulae and answers to the new situations that were constantly arising. Because of this, the mass consciousness of the Kazakhs was always distinguished by intellectual dexterity and an attraction to aphoristic expression.

The distinguishing features of the Kazakh consciousness are reflected in the simplest speech. In dialogue he always attempts to understand the internal world of the interlocutor, to listen to the rhythm of his thoughts and feelings, to understand the inner, hidden basis of his viewpoint.

On the other hand, he has no blind faith in the categorical rightness of his own position. For the Kazakh it is easy to appreciate that the other person's point of view might be equally valid, even where this does not coincide with accepted wisdom. This unconditional ease and quickness of perception, the depth of appreciation of other values and outlooks, is an estimable feature of Kazakh consciousness. It is especially beneficial in the context of the accelerating pace of the modern world, which demands just such a quick and responsive adaptability.

* * *

But besides such an abstract entity (in the material sense) as national consciousness, there existed fully functional mechanisms for the transmission of the national memory within Kazakh society.

This consisted above all of a system of common law, the *adat*⁵. There was also the patriarchal family and the system of kin relationships.

⁵ Adat was the customary law of the Kazakhs.

The significance of each of these elements is hard to overestimate. However, the historical fates of each of these means of transmitting national and social knowledge were quite distinct.

The first, the system of common law, was destroyed. By the nineteenth century administrative and legal reforms virtually abolished the practice of the common law of the steppe.

The twentieth century ended this traditional steppe means of regulating social relations.

The patriarchal family, based on the authority and special role of the *aksakal*⁶ as the main preserver and transmitter of spiritual and moral values, had huge significance for the strength of the national consciousness. The closeness of these venerable old men to the world of national history gave them incontestable authority. Of course, the power and influence of such a body of gerontocrats would be unthinkable in modern society. However the *aksakals* played a hugely positive role in the preservation of a national outlook and this legacy has been passed down to whole generations of Kazakhs even into the twentieth century. But the patriarchal family as a mechanism for transmitting national values was eroded by the pressure of a whole raft of natural and unnatural factors, beginning with demographic changes and ending with the accelerating process of urbanisation. Therefore, any presentation of the patriarchal family as the means of national consolidation, at least in our century, must be accompanied by a large degree of reservation.

* * *

The most significant instrument for the preservation and transmission of tradition for the Kazakh was the extended family.

⁶ An aksakal is an elder within the extended family.

In history there is no scholarly division between black and white. In understanding the limitations and negative aspects of the family today we must recognise the strong link between the psychology of the family and the dramatic history of our people.

Within the extended family everything was equal; all conditions, norms and customs adopted by the collective were sacred and inviolable. Family traditions had an extremely stable place in the consciousness of the individual, as the way of life did not allow him to live otherwise than in the collective. From this the astonishing vitality of family customs, ceremonies, norms and values has survived to this day.

The knowledge of his family, his tribe and his ancestors extending back for seven generations (*zheti ata*) is for each Kazakh a necessary condition for the recognition of his family identity, and, through it, the transmission of the traditions of his people. This in turn illuminates and strengthens the sense of Kazakh ethnic identity, preventing the individual from becoming assimilated and losing this identity through the vicissitudes of fate.

* * *

At the beginning of the twentieth century Kazakhstan basically saw itself as a traditional nomadic society, developing along a natural historic path and preserving an organic integrity.

The basis of nomadic society was the extended family. Every member of this family was related by blood and therefore interacted not as separate individuals, rigidly divided from one another, but as interrelated, inseparable parts of the single body of the family.

The family of several individuals was at that time a single body, a unified organism. Its different parts lived and breathed in full physical, psychological and moral interdependence.

Such a classical model of the family was the natural basis for the historic development of larger organic associations: clans, tribes, the *zhuz*⁷ or horde, and, finally, the Kazakh nation itself.

Therefore any such society based on the patriarchal family had its heart and soul, its unified socio-productive and moral criteria, embodied in tradition.

At the beginning of the twentieth century traditions were passed on through myth, oral poetry, established moral and productive forms, ritual and ceremony.

It is important to note here that an individual member of a family never regarded himself as a separate entity, as a unique individual. He was always a living part of a unified social group at whatever level – family, clan, tribe, *zhuz* or people.

The unshakeable self-confidence of the Kazakh people within the specific conditions of nomadic society was fostered by a unique organ which for ten centuries served to preserve the people as a unified whole. This entire historical body was preserved independently of the presence or absence of state protection. We are talking about the universal knowledge that every Kazakh possesses of *zheti ata* – seven forefathers, seven generations. For the Kazakhs of the steppe, genealogy was as important as a compass for a sailor. Genealogy proved to be their only adequate guide through all the historic, geographic, political, economic and cultural circumstances in which they had been placed by the will of fate.

The knowledge of their family tree was a guarantee of life as they wandered through the steppe. For centuries, the unique family tree of the clan or *zhuz* united the Kazakh people as a single body, organically growing along the principle that all Ka-

⁷ Zhuz: horde. In the Kazakh kaganate there were three powerful hordes: the Old Zhuz in southern Kazakhstan and Semirechie, the Middle Zhuz in central and northern Kazakhstan, and the Young Zhuz in western Kazakhstan. Each of the hordes consisted of a number of tribes, which were further subdivided into smaller tribes and clans. The clans were unified internally by common ancestry.

zakhs are fledglings in the same nest, branches of the same tree, people of one root. From this they derived the consciousness of themselves as a single people, in contrast to the European historical canon which presents them as scattered nomads divided into three basic bodies – the *zhuzy* or hordes – and separated across wide distances. And this unity was understood precisely through genealogy.

A genetic unity emerged, proceeding from the unified family tree. Kazakh nomads always regarded knowledge of their roots and family connections as essential. It was the single most important ethno-moral criterion for the whole nation.

In our history, the principle of *zheti ata* was a natural means of establishing the ethno-biological, ethno-cultural and spiritual unity of the entire Kazakh people. Knowledge of his forebears enabled each individual to trace back the neighbouring branches on his Kazakh family tree in considerable depth, thereby integrating him with all the Kazakhs. This preserved the unbreakable unity of the Kazakh people.

How did the principle of “seven fathers” influence the Kazakh people and how did the body of family connections develop from it?

First, the principle of “seven fathers” was a body of family connections that gave each Kazakh and the people as a whole an irresistible inner attraction to the truth. It was embedded in the consciousness of the people as a whole.

Through knowledge of his place in the Kazakh nation, his “seven fathers”, his clan and his *zhuz*, a Kazakh, no matter where he found himself in his homeland, always knew himself to be among people of the same blood, and felt himself to be a member of one big family. This was the fundamental consciousness of the steppe-dweller, and this hyper-familial awareness was not simply a lesson to be learned by heart. It gave the nomad an un-

derstanding of names, dwelling places and levels and spheres of influence of the entire ethnic group.

Nomad life was boundlessly rich in encounters with different people, *auls* and clans. These allowed old family connections to be constantly refreshed. Nomads were able to ascertain the provenance of a stranger. Even one meeting between two people on the principle of "seven fathers" greatly increased their respective historical awareness. The people were able to establish their unity through matchmaking with members of other clans and hordes.

Today the whole world functions through modern technological networks. But the principle of "seven fathers" as a family network system played an objective role in our history, as though it were a computer network of the steppe, expanding its memory thousands of times each day. Such daily contacts, exchanges of genealogical information on the principle of "seven fathers", enabled the entire people to educate themselves through the history of the clan, the horde and the ethnic group.

Above all, this unique "computer network" of the steppe served to greatly enrich the mind of the nation with a detailed knowledge of their extremely rich history. Working on the principle of "seven fathers", the descendants knew not only the names of their grandfathers but also knew their heroic deeds, their journeys, characters and even the physical appearances of their wives and contemporaries. And so in the memory of every Kazakh such information is preserved in detail, as though there were not a gap of many centuries between ancestors and their great-grandchildren.

Consequently, a single concept was formed of the nation as a united family in which the living carried not only the present but also all that they held in their memory back through many generations. Every ordinary steppe-dweller is open and receptive to history, admitting it into his heart.

Nevertheless, we must bear in mind that ancestor mythology, especially of those who lived in the depths of antiquity, is a product of the natural and understandable human desire to elevate their own ancestors above those of other clans.

The absence of a written tradition reinforced the nomads' ability to create accurate and objective descriptions of past events and their participants.

Second, the principle of "seven fathers" gave each Kazakh an irresistible internal gravitation towards the good, towards the ideals of his ancestors, towards something eternal, whole and unbreakable for all Kazakhs, that is – spiritual excellence, the faith of the people. This was neither a cold nor an exalted faith, but one based on the concrete facts of the history of the shaping of each nomad's sense of self.

The memory of the triumphs and defeats, misfortunes and victories of all my forebears to seven generations gives me hope that I can overcome any difficulty that lies in my path. It is precisely this ideology that lives in the heart of every Kazakh.

Above all, the spirit of the ancestors – *aruakhi* – helps me live from day to day. Religious feelings and belief in my ancestors are rooted in my blood. I know that the *aruakhi* helped them; I believe that they will help me too. And this is how, I believe, the Kazakhs of traditional nomadic society lived.

It follows that the body of "seven fathers" is an organ that transmitted faith through many generations of the Kazakh people, from the past into the future. It inspired faith in the good, in a common centre, the birth and the life of the family, the clan and the people. In this way it was a very powerful and rational instrument of the practical everyday life of the Kazakhs. Such a faith, bestowed by a whole chain of immediate forebears, lived in the heart of each individual and essentially helped him overcome any difficulties that might arise in his life.

During hard times such a belief gave both the individual and the people as a whole a sense of choice in the face of external pressures. It also enabled them to preserve a clear mind, pure heart and clean conscience, thereby helping them find ways out of the most challenging historical situations.

On the other hand this custom of acting on the basis of precedent accrued on a mass scale over the course of centuries, building up a thick stratum of ritual practice, with an ossification of ideas and normative behaviour models.

When the level of socio-economic and general cultural development of Kazakh society began to lag behind that of surrounding peoples, when it began to suffer defeats by outside enemies, when it became rent by internal contradictions, when it fell into colonial dependence as part of the Russian empire, in a word, when it experienced constant defeats, the principle of "seven fathers" played a role in accumulating defeatist attitudes. It depressed the will of the people and over centuries forged an image based on separateness, a national complex that evolved over at least three hundred years.

Besides which, there has been conscious belittlement on the part of Eurocentrists, especially by Soviet propaganda and science, who portray the history of the nomads as that of a lazy and indolent people without initiative, leading a torpid half-life. This has had a destructive and fatal impact on the Kazakh national self-image. Before us, therefore, stands the historical imperative of reviving our self-respect, and of writing an objective history in all its positive and negative aspects, its victories and defeats.

Third, the principle of "seven fathers", is connected to the imperceptible but truly universal Kazakh sense of responsibility for their deeds in the face of the spirit of their ancestors, *Malym – zhanymnyn sadagasy, zhanym – arymnyn sadagasy*, that is, "all my riches are nothing compared to my life; my life is nothing in the face of my honour." This unique psychological foundation

of nomadic life was developed to the point of perfection over the course of centuries. In it was concentrated the behaviour, rituals, moral ideals, norms and values of human steppe society. All material and spiritual aspects of Kazakh life were regulated by the detailed etiquette of family relations based on the principle of “seven fathers”. This principle embodied the strict moral code of Kazakh life based on tradition, ritual, custom and taboo.

Interclan and interfamilial relations took shape through the establishment of hierarchies. These were rigid and lifeless structures that failed to adapt to change and to reflect the actual balance of power.

Social relations, both inside and outside the clan, were subordinated to a rigid etiquette which strictly regimented each detail of life – mutual obligations and duties, precedence of claim to gifts and honours, degrees of respect, what was permitted and what was forbidden, prohibitions and punishments. This code governed social interaction, tone and atmosphere, spatial arrangement of the yurt or seating around the *dastarkhan*⁸, the order in which guests were to be received, and the order of serving dishes, the menu and so on. Every possible variant was registered, even the most unlikely situations, with a scale of obligations and duties. This system of rights and duties existed as an entire etiquette in the fullest sense of the word. It served as the moral framework for the internal regulation of the nomadic life of our ancestors.

These norms of family relations began as a moral code for the regulation of daily life and gradually reached the status of judicial measures. Degrees of punishment varied, up to the most severe – banishment from the family circle, which practically meant full exclusion from society. For the ordinary person there was no more cruel and shameful punishment.

⁸ Low dining table.

Nevertheless, conditions arose in which “mutual assistance” could occur, at times when an individual or group was in the right, but in being so they went against the interests of their extended family or clan. In these instances there arose a collision between the truth itself and the moral rigidity of the clan.

Fourth, the principle of “seven fathers” was a body of familial ties which for each Kazakh was an extremely powerful instrument of spiritual unity on the deepest level. Although quite straightforward, the principle of “seven fathers” was a mighty directive body. It was the heart of ethnic unity based on familial love. Besides the Kazakhs there are no other people on this earth today, who, through the unwritten laws of the steppe, forbid marriages between people who are related back to the seventh generation. The strong genetic stock of the Kazakh people is the product of this wisdom.

Members of seven generations of one clan enter into marriage with members of another. It is precisely because of this that when two Kazakhs from different ends of the steppe meet, they are obliged to ascertain whether they are related. All Kazakhs are united as the children of one root; therefore, they are all kinfolk of one another. At this level it is not important which tribe they belong to. From this stems the unity of all the Kazakhs.

After seven generations, the children born to one family created a strong clan.

When a girl married she brought to her new family the attributes of her kin, its dialect, the warmth of its family hearth, the spiritual traditions of her own family circle, its songs, dances, legends, its artistic qualities in weaving, embroidery, handicrafts, its art of preparing food – all the distinctive qualities of the milieu she has left. Was it not this that established that unity of tradition and language with its lack of dialects, which today exists in the vast area of our state?

Besides this, the bride's arrival into a different clan was her own clan's way of exchanging the art of familial love and the upbringing of children. Kazakh mothers and daughters nurture the ethnic group with all the warmth of their hearts, the flame of their love, tenderness and care. In this way, imperceptibly, they forged the national, spiritual and cultural unity of the Kazakh people.

The Kazakh sense of family obligation towards the descendants of several generations means that the majority of people will receive me as a loved one of the same flesh and blood, and so love and protect me. This love goes far beyond the normal boundaries of family and tribe. It extends to the level of clan, *zhuz* and, finally, to that of the people as a whole.

When the seven generations of one family grew up and branched out, at times they divided into an independent family and in this way augmented the whole ethnic group. The elders invited witnesses from all seven families, sacrificed a white stallion, and with its blood drew the family sign – the *tamga*. The family *uran* was a war cry. This reinforced a new feeling of love, not on the level of the family but of the entire clan. And so the seven generations of kinsmen succeeded in branching into other families. Therefore, each individual, a branch from a single tree, grew and intertwined with other branches of the one Kazakh tree. From here it naturally followed that the family grew through unity based on love, reinforcing love towards the entire people. And, in turn, the love and the power of the people nurtured the love and power of the family.

As we see, the principle of "seven fathers" was a body of family connections that gradually strengthened every Kazakh and the Kazakh nation as a whole, bestowing an irresistible inner gravitation towards truth, God, responsibility and spiritual unity. This principle brought to the nation Reason, Faith, Conscience and Love – the four most important instruments of her indepen-

dence. It is these very instruments by which the Spirit of the nation governs its Flesh.

Such were the basic elements of the mentality of Kazakh traditional nomad society. With the passage of time these have undergone a substantive and qualitative transformation.

* * *

During the gradual erosion of centralised power brought about by the colonisation of the territory of Kazakhstan, family relations fulfilled the function of power and control, regulating many facets of social life both internally and on an interfamilial level.

The imposition of external bodies of power during the colonial and Soviet periods did not meet internal national requirements. The system of family relations fulfilled this function, embracing the entire nation. Its most important elements were: the *zhuz*; on the regional level, sub-divisions within the *zhuz*; on a local level, the clan itself, the family and finally the individual, the "I" as the descendant of "seven fathers".

At the same time, every Kazakh individual living in the "here and now" had a historical and cultural memory, and felt diachronically as well as synchronically connected to all Kazakhs living "here and now" on the whole vast expanse of the Great Steppe.

It is understood that the ordinary Kazakh- *naiman* from the Altai Mountains could not know the internal subdivisions of the clans and tribes of the western Kazakhs, but he was certainly aware of the existence of Kazakhs of the Young Zhuz. All the same, thanks to the system of clan relations, every ordinary Kazakh could behold the immense Kazakh steppe as a land populated by one Kazakh people. Above all, he was conscious of his role and place as an individual.

At the level of the nation state the system of externally imposed bodies of power detracted from the overall national unity of the Kazakhs. At the same time, these powers presented the clan divisions of Kazakh society as mechanisms for national disintegration.

Regardless of this, the division of society into clans remained one of several mechanisms for the transmission of the ethno-social memory of the people. It seems paradoxical that it was precisely this mechanism, rather than the nation itself, that served to preserve the ethnic group. But this paradox was a reality in the history of the Kazakhs.

The loss of their nation state meant neither the loss of the collective memory of the Kazakh people nor their exit from the arena of history as a self-conscious whole. The people neither sank into oblivion nor were swept away by the tides of history.

The Kazakh people as an ethno-cultural whole were saved thanks to their ethno-collective memory, which was preserved in the institution of clan divisions. This operation of "ethnological reductionism", from which each Kazakh derived his individual sense of self, was a necessity placed before the entire Kazakh people by the historical trials to which it was subjected.

The institutions of Kazakh society declined to a dangerously low level. For an extended period national and cultural self-preservation was left to the family or clan.

* * *

Contemporary intra-ethnic differentiation is based on reasons of a predominantly historical nature.

The specific characteristics of the Kazakh ethno-cultural system are closely linked to the past. In the classical Kazakh ethno-cultural system the personality of the individual was formed within the boundaries of clan society. Personal behaviour in the

family circle, regardless of the body of nomadic-military democracy, was quite strictly detailed and hierarchically ordered.

Circumstantial evidence of the hierarchical nature of the Kazakh ethno-system was provided by the existence of *tulengut* – people who entered into external service. Through service to the khan, sultan or powerful and influential beys, they could become very prosperous themselves.

However, from the start of their service they lost the right to belong to their clan of origin.

Departing from those closest to them meant the loss of horizontal relations of solidarity – the support and mutual assistance of clan members. Instead they entered a vertical hierarchy made up of people from outside their clan of origin. Here they lacked the counterbalance of the system of horizontal solidarity. In this situation the individual found himself in a state of constant stress.

We can conclude that exit from the sphere of one's closest kin (the clan) meant a serious curtailment of freedom, a loss of individuality. It follows that this same freedom of the individual could exist only within the framework of the internal clan hierarchy.

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The role of imperial politics and its exploitation of clan contradictions must also not be underestimated. History shows that Russian citizenship was forcibly imposed at different times and stages. This impacted on the internal contradictions of the Kazakh nation.

The final loss of national independence was a blow to the economic foundation of the traditional way of life. Local bodies of power were liquidated and the bodies of kaganate and sultanate abolished.

Administrative and political bodies were dismembered. The country became an object of colonial "divide and rule" politics.

With the aim of weakening the national liberation struggle of the Kazakh people, tsarism inflamed interclan rivalry, playing off one against another, particularly when selecting individuals for positions of power.

This has been the subject of no small number of historical and literary works. The Kazakh people remember the old tsarist politics, and this is a form of immunisation which must surely serve as their future protection.

The reforms of 1822: "On the Siberian Kirghiz", and of 1824: "On ruling the Orenburg Kirghiz", were the beginnings of the forced removal of the population from their centuries-old pastoral way of life. The mass of the population of the steppe land was resettled, significantly narrowing the areas of traditional nomadic life. This did huge damage to pastoralism which had been the means of existence for the greatest part of the population.

Tsarist resettlement policies resulted in the permanent reduction of the ethnic territory of the Kazakh nation. It resulted in agricultural deterioration and loss.

Those who were resettled lost their "ethnic continuity", leading to dysfunctions in the ethno-social organism, which significantly slowed the process of consolidation of the Kazakh people.

In the development of socio-ethnic societies the ethnic aspect has its own relatively independent developmental logic. The lack of synchronicity in the tempos of development of the social and the ethnic aspects is caused by the relative independence and inertia of the latter component. This discrepancy in the rate of change of the ethnic and social parameters can be termed "ethnic drag".

From here it follows that in one and the same socio-historic period, in one and the same society, peoples with different "eth-

no-historical ages” may exist in parallel with each other, and this reveals the stage of ethno-genetic development of one or another ethnic group.

* * *

The natural interest in one’s past takes on a distorted and unpleasant form when poorly-qualified specialists, in examining the period of dynamic growth of national self-awareness, treat the general euphoria arising from the initial stages of independent statehood as an opportunity for invention, individual self-expression or glorification of their own clan group.

In the first two years of Kazakh independence this became a widespread phenomenon. An alarming number of incompetent historians tried to write the ethno-genesis and history of the people from their own parochial perspectives.

However, this phenomenon did result in the accumulation of facts and primary generalisations about the history of the various provinces and regions of Kazakhstan, which, after critical scientific analysis, may serve as a basis for serious work on the history of Kazakhstan.

* * *

As a stage in the ethno-genetic development of the Kazakh people, family and clan identification today is in a state of inertia. The task of the nation is to do everything necessary to ensure that this inertia serves to consolidate our people.

The basic mass of the Kazakh population is characterised by a political monoculture in terms of acceptance of common socio-political norms and values, concepts of power and roads to its attainment.

The following general socio-political conditions may be identified: national statehood; the construction of a unitary state-political system; the territorial integrity of the republic; the inviolability of state borders; the presidential form of government; Kazakh as the state language.

The ground for building a state capable of defending the interests of the Kazakh nation was prepared by generations of our Kazakh ancestors, who suffered heavy losses from war and invasion, withstood the terrible years of ethnocide in the 1930s and were unbroken by the totalitarian century. We need to build a state in which the Kazakh people can live their lives to the fullest. Any loss of tempo due to quarrels or internal contradictions among our people may on no account ever be justified.

* * *

In contrast to arithmetical problems history produces no single answers. In understanding the huge positive role played by the clan bodies of the past, we must carefully evaluate the understandably negative results of the emphasis on clan aspects of our history today. It is unnecessary to dramatise this issue, in contrast to those who, through ignorance or malice, are keen to pass judgement on the problems of the Kazakhs.

In reality, the majority of ordinary Kazakhs regard genealogy as an element of culturological creativity determined by fundamental advances in the very foundation of our nation. Independence provides a new potential for solving these problems; our nation must take advantage of this.

* * *

History presented us with a complex legacy and we have only a short time in which to respond to the new issues that arise

before us. The most important of these is that of internal national consolidation. Of course we need to construct new systems of economic activity, foreign affairs and military defence. However, another matter concerns us here, namely the sphere of national consciousness which emanates from the national soul.

Unification for the Kazakh nation starts with the building of Kazakh statehood, the development of patriotism and the modernisation of the popular consciousness, which involves the consolidating function of the Kazakh language, the focused activity of the aforementioned driving groups and the birth of a historic consciousness.

* * *

Whether we like it or not, we live and work by the laws of modern life. Which is better – to observe the demands of the market and modern technology while leaving our consciousness locked in a mythological world, away from the breath of “living” history, or to live in the modern world while all the time consciously choosing our own path which has centuries of our cultural development preserved within it? It is clear that the imperative of time will march forward whether we like it or not.

It is doing so as we speak. Therefore, the modernisation of the popular consciousness is not a tactical or political issue but an absolute imperative for the entire nation.

This problem is especially pressing in the face of national consciousness today, which is a conglomeration of socialist and traditional outlooks coupled to a fairly superficial assimilation of liberal ideas.

It is time to understand the simple truth that a modernising consciousness by no means contradicts the national one. On the contrary, only the modernisation of the national consciousness will guarantee the preservation of our national identity! For no

one can mistake the modern Korean for an Englishman or Japanese for a Frenchman. During the past decades both the Koreans and the Japanese have successfully modernised their national consciousness. Now, at the end of the century, this nationwide task stands before the Kazakhs.

* * *

The building of a state is not a straightforward task; it is the lengthy and difficult striving of a nation for self-understanding.

History can grant us everything except independence as a form of inner freedom. Independence is the only form of existence for a people who are aware of and responsible for their right to take their place in the stream of world history. One cannot examine this question from a static position. The world changes and within it peoples and individuals.

Institutional legalisation is only an outer manifestation of deep inner change within a people aware of the absolute necessity of their free participation in history. Having gained awareness of their duty towards the state, the people must also be prepared to take on responsibility for the internal business of their country today and in the future.

If our Kazakh people do not withstand the hardships and deprivations which have always accompanied great changes in history and which we face again today, we can only expect the collapse of our hopes for a strong statehood. Beyond this lies the possibility of national suicide.

Once again I emphasise the fact that people create their own freedom. It is inadmissible to place this responsibility onto someone else. And every Kazakh must ask himself whether he is worthy of this freedom, whether he understands what it means, whether he knows what responsibilities he carries? Therefore today it is neither rhetorical nor pretentious to ask: "What can

I personally do in the name of Kazakh independence, what can I do for my country and my people?" For only by making conscious and active efforts ourselves do we have the right to asking anything of others. On the road to its independent development Kazakhstan will have to surmount considerable difficulties.

The modern world is neither peaceful nor stable. And we are affected by this. For the realisation of the deepest interests of the nation we need leadership based on wisdom, strength and high ideals.

But, all the same, it is too easy to regard the building of a state as the exclusive work of a bureaucracy. True independence will never be built this way. It remains the business of the nation, a project that involves the nation as a whole. Today there is no greater goal than the consolidation of the nation, the building of an independent statehood.

A deep understanding of our historical roots, a legitimate pride in the great triumph of our ancestors in overcoming the difficulties created by the totalitarian epoch, the restoration of an appropriate historical consciousness – all these will provide a powerful stimulus towards national consolidation.

In their time, Europeans sailed their fragile vessels into the unknown, ploughing through vast expanses of water. They dramatically broadened their national horizons and, largely thanks to their appreciation of the greatness of their history, achieved massive advances in nation building. That was on the water.

Our ancestors successfully brought about the unification of the people, the conquering of time and distance. That was on land.

Their incessant travel over unimaginably vast distances took place in an age which lacked modern means of transport! They participated in the ethno-genesis of many modern and powerful nations. They enriched the peoples with whom they came into contact, introducing customs, traditions, methods of cultivation

and religious doctrines. They widened these peoples' knowledge of the natural world of Eurasia, tearing them from the confines of native ideas. The entire spiritual atmosphere of those times was suffused with the myths and legends of our ancestors. This era was permeated by a specifically nomadic world because the nomads were predominant. Both the steppe elites and the ordinary nomad-warrior saw themselves as part of an integrated panorama that embraced a culture, customs and traditions, a people and a state system, and which extended over thousands of kilometres.

This is understandable, given that in one year the steppe-dwellers were, for example, in the foothills of the Altai or Alatau, and the next year in the Crimea; after that in Lithuania and again the next year in the Caucasus. And everywhere they went they took part in the most important events of peoples and states. After centuries of distorted education this realisation is astonishing, but the facts have been proved by modern researchers, and known to science for a long while.

An understanding of his place in history, pride in his ancestors and, on a national level, an awareness of the enormous significance of the Kazakhs and their forebears in the history of the huge land mass of Eurasia, bring redemption from images and stereotypes that undermined national self-esteem. This is a powerful and absolutely modern means of national consolidation! In the recent past the cultural marginalisation of a part of the Kazakh population, especially in comparison to other ethno-cultural systems, is largely related to this failure to appreciate their own history. The overcoming of internal cultural difficulties is largely connected to an awareness of national history as a source of legitimate pride and cultural self-understanding.

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Of course, the Kazakh language, such a powerful agent of national consolidation in the most difficult years, cannot but be an instrument of national consolidation under conditions of independence today.

It may be said without exaggeration that Kazakh culture, one of the most ancient and original in the entire continent, stood on the verge of extinction in the twentieth century. Such key features of national existence as language and ethno-cultural identification were under threat. Some great person of the past said that between the creation of a language and its demise stands only one generation who do not speak that tongue. The capacious and flexible Kazakh language of the great philosophers and brilliant poets, the tongue which expressed the ancient and multifaceted experience of nomadic life with its cosmic themes of the solitariness of man against the starry skies, and the eternal life cycle which reproduced the organic unity of the nomad with nature, stood on the verge of extinction.

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When in modern Kazakhstan we raise the question of the birth of the Kazakh language, it is not only an issue for the Kazakh people. There are at least three paths that lead beyond a strictly utilitarian approach to the task.

First, the Kazakh language in all its power and splendour has a place in the arena of world linguistics. The achievement of the Kazakh language contributes to the overall semantic riches of all humanity. In the same way we may speak of the achievements of the Ukrainian, Uzbek or Russian languages. There are Kazakh words that are found in the lexicons of no other languages in the world; there are slices of reality that only find expression in the

Kazakh tongue. The development of the Kazakh language is a powerful instrument in the general humanitarian order; it is the perfection of an instrument of cognition and appraisal of the surrounding world.

In comparing the English and Russian languages, in both of which he was fluent, the Nobel laureate Joseph Brodsky likened the former to a mature man and the latter to a youth. Perhaps this is true in some purely philological sense, and still more so in the lofty mental heights of a poetic demigod, but as far as the Kazakh is concerned, the language is rich enough to express the most subtle nuances in the life of the people – from the wise reflections of the *aksakal* to the sweeping judgements of an impetuous youth, from peaceful reflections on daily joys to eschatological prognoses. No Russian would agree that the language of Pushkin is poorer than that of Shakespeare, despite any purely statistical criteria of lexicographical richness etc. The most important question is the capacity of a language to adequately situate and express the actual cultural-historical experience of a people. We must come from such an understanding when we speak of the birth and development of the Kazakh language on this land. Only here can it possibly develop to its fullest potential.

Second, the Kazakh language is a part of the national outlook on the world. One of the real – and not invented – problems of Kazakh consciousness is the inadequate command of the language on the part of some Kazakhs themselves. There exist in the world some examples of the preservation of national consciousness where a full command of the native language is absent. But this as a rule only arises in situations of artificial colonial assimilation or in ethnic Diasporas, not in the ethnic motherland.

There can be no consolidation of the nation without the existence of the basic element for such consolidation – the language. This is not to blame the small section of the Kazakh population who do not yet have an adequate command of their native

tongue. Until recently the potential for professional advancement and the dissemination of information largely called for knowledge of the Russian language. In short, this is a hangover from the previous linguistic era. But today the task of learning the native tongue is a moral and national imperative for every Kazakh.

The Jews, for example, arriving from every corner of the world to Israel, are reviving their own native language. Today the once-forgotten Flemish and Yakut languages have established their status as official languages. It is simply absurd to see some sort of nationalism in this. It is a universal means of national integration.

One must not study a language with the casualness of a student cramming before an exam. And it no longer suffices to use certain objective difficulties as an excuse. It is absolutely vital to have a command of the native tongue. Most importantly, the creation of the state has provided the institutional preconditions for the development of the Kazakh language, constitutionally strengthening its status, implementing huge changes in the educational system and establishing high-quality systems of information in the Kazakh language. All this simply did not exist at the beginning of the decade.

With their command of the Russian language, one of the richest and most complex in the world, our fathers and grandfathers set a rare precedent of attaining almost total bilingualism, not just among the elite but virtually the entire people. Today the task is simpler – the Kazakhs must excel in their language and not just on an everyday level. There is no tragic separation here. There needs to be patience on the part of the huge Kazakh nation, for whom the language is as natural as air, and a real effort made by those who owing to circumstances often not of their own making are uncertain in elements of their mother tongue.

Third, as the state language, Kazakh operates across the whole of the country. The main institutional preconditions for all

Kazakhs to have a full command of their language have already been put in place.

Of course, it would be wrong to demand that the entire population of the country attains native fluency in the Kazakh language. Such a command of the basic state language must come about in stages as a means of national integration. However, the question is not simply about a legal time frame. There is no need to be distracted by legalities in this complex matter.

On the practical level there is another matter of importance – to prepare ourselves for the conscious mastery of the Kazakh language and culture, one of the richest in Eurasia.

For the Kazakh mastery of Russian culture was unconditionally and indisputably a positive phenomenon, a practical influence on the informational and intellectual horizons of the nation as a whole. And not only on a rational level. The sound, thought and whole speech structure of the language in which some of the greatest novelists of the nineteenth century wrote, the figures of Platon Karataev, Grigory Melkhov, Alyosha Karamazov and the old men of the distant mother entered our national consciousness. The light of a great culture shone upon us. We learned to appreciate the true value of the Russian people and culture, free from all misrepresentation. It is precisely because of this that the relation of an overwhelming number of Kazakhs to one of the greatest European peoples is defined not by the nostalgia of aggressive and hysterical demagogues who dream of restoration, but by the deep cultural legacy which has been left on our national consciousness by the Russian humanist tradition. In this lies the sense of true culture – the rapprochement of peoples on the basis of mutual understanding.

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In contrast to political revolutions, cultural revolutions take place without shooting and bloodshed, through a transition from one political elite to another. At times these have been very significant. Being longer lasting and more fundamental in their consequences, cultural transformations draw their strength from different sources than political revolutions.

At times we fail to notice that changes have occurred to the basic features of cultural activity in the past decade. Time calls for the establishment of a cultural model adapted to a market economy and external values and pressures. It must be pluralistic in principle, have dialogue as its essence and be multilinguistic and multireligious in function. In building this cultural model we must take into account the limits imposed by time and circumstance.

The key is a change in the principles of cultural activity.

First we have to reject the dictates of a single unifying ideology. This principle is reinforced by the constitution. Today, when we hear people speak of the necessity of creating a strict and unified state ideology, we must consider what this really means. In practice it means harsh political censorship and the curtailment of the dissemination of non state-controlled information. It means that the political censor would once again stand over writers and artists. For the first time in the history of this century, our state consciously rejects any form of pressure on the creative process. This is our main position.

The other question is the search for the overall national idea. This cannot be carried out using totalitarian methods. Yes, a concept of consolidation is necessary, but I shall speak of this later.

Second, the development of a Kazakh cultural model is determined today by engagement with world culture, with new contexts of meaning in the modern world, with both the overt and hidden tensions within the valuable but problematic arena

of modernity. There is no longer any cultural "Iron Curtain". It is a bitter truth that, in the understanding of geocultural realities, it is very hard to break away from provincialism and the call for a totalitarian rather than a national tradition. It is much easier to blame the whole world for "going in the wrong direction", and complain that its modern-day cultural activity tends only towards the ersatz and populist. It is much harder to embrace the principles of openness in the process of global cultural creativity.

Third, the parameters of Kazakh development are undergoing a qualitative change, along with those of the cultures of the ethnic minorities that exist in Kazakh territory. Here, a huge number of issues arise in connection with the preservation of cultural traditions, as well as the appearance of a new phenomenon – the cultural identity of the people of Kazakhstan as a civil community.

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Culturologists quite often use the concept of "cultural inertia". In everyday language it signifies a succession of traditions, tastes, customs etc. It is true that a Kazakh would not be a Kazakh without knowing the *Karakoz*, if he did not love the sounds of the *dombra*⁹ or the scent of the steppe wormwood. This mechanism of common national cultural values, the "emotional field", holds true, always and everywhere, for every people and generation. Without this "national island" there would be no nation.

At the same time we are entering unknown territory in the history of our nation. We have founded a democratic society and a legitimate state while undergoing a complete change in the economic system and, what is more, with relics from the totalitarian era still lingering in the background. In this situation the

⁹ The *dombra* is a two-stringed long-necked lute.

former mechanisms that supported the continuity of cultural values cannot be adapted to the new realities overnight. Our institutions are simply insufficient for all the riches of the national culture, while the old mechanisms are inadequate to meet modern economic and political demands. At times this invokes a mood of pessimism and despair in the creative intelligentsia, but this malaise will pass.

One of our most urgent tasks is to develop modern cultural institutions suited to the preservation our national traditions.

At the same time we do not need to idealise totalitarian instruments of cultural promotion. It is insulting to suggest that totalitarianism advanced the culture of the people, including that of the Kazakhs. As though there had not already existed a national spiritual history of Chokan Valikhanov, Abai or Kurmangazy. If we go further we see a whole galaxy of stars of a continental and even global stature such as al-Farabi, Yassau and Kashgari. Had there been no totalitarian regime, what might the Kazakhs not have achieved in terms of cultural self-expression? Who knows what heights of spiritual and intellectual power they might have reached!

* * *

It is time to understand the simple truth. Totalitarianism extended its means of informational control over the individual and the nation through a network of ideological filters. Considerable resources went into establishing these powerful institutional mechanisms. Today, our resource base is significantly lower, although this is a temporary situation. But the aims of the totalitarian system were clear and transparent, and the national culture, such as it was, counted for nothing within them. In return for a limited freedom, which some people recall today with such nostalgia, we had to spend a lifetime concealing our national worth.

Within that framework there were no more than timid attempts to defend the national identity. There was freedom in the small and lack of freedom in the great, which could in no way serve as the basis for the Kazakh cultural model.

The new reality that is breaking so powerfully over Kazakhstan broadens our cultural horizons on a massive scale. Only now can we say that we are beginning to grasp world culture in all its forms, richness and complexities. It is paradoxical that Abai, writing a century ago, was hugely erudite and open to world culture. It is paradoxical that Chokan Valikhanov was a world-class geographer. But this paradox is imaginary. The national talent of the Kazakh people, based on the fundamental openness of their consciousness, could have brought about a spiritual breakthrough much earlier. After almost a century of seclusion we stand on the threshold of a new opening in our cultural universe. We stand on the threshold of dramatic struggles and clashes. But, nevertheless, this freedom of cultural choice is the only possible and worthwhile way in which our national culture can exist.

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Cultural modernisation, of course, is somewhat more complex than advertising and placing price tags on products. It is not a question of imposing new cultural norms, although “the war of ideas” also has a place in the modern world. The foundations of the economic, political and technological norms of national and international existence have to change. The answer to these cultural demands may be found only in conjunction with other cultures, each of which is subjected to the pressures of modernity. Only through such a dialogue will we be able to answer the question of whether Kazakhstan takes an independent and original place in the world spiritual arena or splinters into a mass of cultural fragments.

This is no idle question. Our tomorrows depend upon the decisions we make today.

With the pride and joy of neophytes we recognise that ancient and original civilisations existed in the territory of Kazakhstan. The hot and boundless Kazakh steppe gave a sense of rhythm to the huge area of Eurasia. The graves of our ancestors were silent witnesses to events of a global scale. Of course, journeying from this land to far-off places was not always peaceful. Our distant ancestors brought new technologies and knowledge into other countries, and these later became sources of global innovation. The cultural achievement of the nomads is a question that has been subjected to extreme ideological bias. To this day it has not been fully appraised. When history is written according to the prejudices of its time it is only to be pitied. And we were subjected to precisely this kind of "history" until recently.

There is no need to exaggerate the historical legacy of our forebears. It is so huge and impressive that it requires no mythologising. The range of our ancestors' cultural and political influences is great – from Egypt to India, from Europe to China – and multi-faceted. This was been so well researched and documented that it does not leave a shadow of doubt about the falsity of the stereotype of the "centuries-old backwardness of the Steppe". What only ten or fifteen years ago appeared as mere intuition on the part of certain historians or as inspired poetic vision is today an object of systematic analysis. And we must clearly understand that this occurred not accidentally but as a result of the establishment of Kazakh independence and that of its Central Asian neighbours. This approach, based on the actual historical truth of the cultural influence of the Great Steppe, was not so long ago regarded as heresy.

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Over the course of many decades traditional European historiography has treated nomads as some kind of historical curse visited on settled peoples and states. Eurocentrism thoroughly invalidated the role of nomads – Turks and Mongols – in world history. As a result we must seek our historical roots today through a veil of distortion. And this is not with the intent of creating some sort of idealised history of our people, but of uncovering the real process in all its many forms.

It was necessary to go through two bloody world wars and the economic, political social and ecological disasters of the twentieth century to deliver ourselves from the belief in the absolute infallibility of European civilisation. The rapid advance of the East, above all of Japan, and also of the new industrial “tigers”, shows that the European experience of progress is not necessarily the ideal one and that humanism is only one model for civilisation.

It is precisely this lack of understanding of the role of Eastern civilisations that inspired George Friday to write: “And what of the history of the peoples of the East? Western textbooks only pay them attention where they connect to the history of the West. Arabs, for example, appear on the pages of textbooks only to conquer Spain and fight against the crusaders in Palestine, after which they exit the historical arena and dissolve into oblivion. Between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries India emerged from the fabled and legendary dark of endless night in order to be exploited by trading companies. China was wrenched out of sad isolation by ‘civilisers’ at the time of the ‘opium’ wars, and as far as Japan is concerned, over the course of two centuries it was symbolised by the samurai – the slaying of Portuguese monks was given a couple of paragraphs highlighting the events of 1853.” (UNESCO Courier. 30 year anthology. M. 1990, page 179).

* * *

If we continue with the comparison, it would appear that Asia is only just now starting to function, that it was born only after a lengthy period during which hordes of barbarians on horseback destroyed the cultural achievements of Europe before disappearing again into the gloom of history. And when the nomadic peoples appeared it was only to prove the moribundity of this way of life and to give way to civilised peoples.

Soviet textbooks added yet another myth that the entire nomadic people lived only in the hope of the coming socialist revolution which would pull them out of darkness. Those peoples who existed within the Russian empire, regardless of all the oppression this entailed, were in a state of historical "luck", because they would bypass capitalism to arrive at socialism.

* * *

I believe that such a view of history was a product of the ingrained traditions of Soviet- and Euro-centrism. As the descendants of the great peoples of antiquity we must not substitute the history of others for our own. It is time to re-examine our past, present and future without bias.

"Pride in the glories of our ancestors is not only desirable, it is a duty. Not to honour them would be shameful faintheartedness," wrote Pushkin. Fate willed that until quite recently more than one generation of Kazakhs and other Central Asian peoples were regarded as "younger brothers" within the Russian and Soviet empires. Knowledge of our glorious past and the lives of our ancestors was forbidden fruit. "We must take fire from the past, not ashes," declared J Jaures. It seems that according to a certain type of historiography our ancestors left not even ashes, but dust, which, nonetheless, our ancestral memory did not scatter to the winds.

* * *

For our people the idea of the state was always the unifying beginning; to date Kazakhs have known two types. The first was the preference for nomadism from the moment of origin of Kazakh society to its liquidation in the wake of colonisation by the Russian Empire. The second was Soviet statehood, which had only formal character.

Today, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, and having already established a new type of statehood, we have real prospects for the future. This, perhaps, is the last chance that history will give our people.

We face a stark choice: either we accept and adapt to contemporary reality and create a new Kazakhstan, or we fade into oblivion.

We have chosen the former path, and our new foundations must rest on the great riches of our historical heritage. In dreaming of the achievements of the future, let us remember those of our past.



THE KAZAKH STEPPE –
PART OF THE GREAT
TURKIC EL

*Through the hands of wise men
Have passed
Many Arab and Persian books
But this is the first
In which the Turks can hear their own tongue.*

Yusuf Balasaguni

Almost two thousand years ago the distinctive Andronovo culture evolved on our land, with developed systems of animal husbandry and agriculture. When these tribes moved to Hindustan to form great cultures and states they became known as Aryans. The Saka¹⁰ tribes of Kazakhstan were direct descendants of the Andronovo people – Aryans and Turs, the Dakhs and Dans of Avesta. Archaeology draws a straight line of connection between the Saka and the Andronovo cultures. Anthropology, too, has established this genetic continuity of the Bronze Age Saka population.

From the beginning of the Saka era the inhabitants of the Kazakh steppe had Mongoloid-type features of Central Asiatic provenance. This era saw a transition to nomadic pastoralism as the most progressive farming method under the prevailing conditions.

States came into being that they were capable of withstanding invasions from Iranian warriors and the army of Alexander the Great. Here the unity of man and horse was forged, thanks to which the Turks and other nomadic peoples were able to subjugate half the known world and hold the rest – Western Europe and China – at bay. Here, on the shores of the Irtysh, the Ili, Syr Darya, Zhaika and Yedil, the capitals of great empires were built – of the Huns, the Turkic kaganates, the Karluk states, the lands of the Mongol khans and their successors.

* * *

The central region of the entire Eurasian continent is a belt of steppe land and desert on which the great nomadic states arose. Distinct cultures originated in the area of present-day Kazakh-

¹⁰ The Saka people were also known by their classical Greek name: Scythians.

stan and its contiguous lands, and these had a direct influence on the development of many peoples of the world.

The first powerful nomadic empire in Central Asia was formed in the third century BCE by the Syunni (Huns, Gunns). They rapidly spread across an area from Transbaikal to Tibet, from Central Asia to Khuankhe, rocking the five-hundred-year-old ancient Chinese kingdom to its foundations. By the fourth and fifth centuries CE the chronicles relate that the Huns had arrived in Europe and Western Asia.

In the sixth century a new historical phenomenon appeared on the scene in Eurasia – the Turkic kaganate. During its period of expansion the Steppe empire of the Turks spread across an area of land that stretched from Korea to the Crimea. From the sixth to the eighth centuries the chronicles of the time mention the first Turkic peoples in Europe – the Avars, Bulgarians, Suvars and Khazars. Then from the east appeared Oguzy-Pechenegs, Turks, Seldjuks and Karluks, Kypchaks (Polovtsy, Komany), and Kyrgyz. The Turkic tribes settled in a large area of Kazakhstan and Central Asia, penetrating into Iran and the Caucasus; in the eleventh century some of these (Oguz and Turkmen) crossed into Asia Minor. In short, the spread of Turkic tribes brought with it settlement and assimilation with local populations, and, in some cases, a continuation of the nomadic way of life, resulting in the formation of a large family of Turkic-speaking ethnic groups, from Yakuts, Tuvans, Altai, Kazakhs and Uighurs in the east to Chuvash, Gagauts, Tatars (Volga and Crimean), Kumyks, Karachaevs, Balkars and Turks in the west.

* * *

Over the course of two thousand years our ancestors played a significant role in the development of states from the Far East to Western Europe, from Siberia to Hindustan.

Nomad travel over vast distances changed the ethnic and political maps of Eurasia. In antiquity and the Middle Ages the movements of Central Asian nomads affected the distribution of the Altai language family – one of the most important in the world (with its basic Turkish and Mongol branches), to which the Kazakh language belongs. This era saw the spread through Eurasia of one of the most widespread family of languages – the Turkic.

“The physical and psychological mobility of the early nomadic world was an important factor in its dynamic and impulsive development. It is no accident that archaeological remains show symbols of leaping animal figures and battle scenes. A new level of technical development brought advances in the sphere of communications. The borders of the world were expanded. Almost instantaneously new methods of production spread over vast areas of land.” (VM Masson, “Nomads and ancient civilisations: dynamics and typologies of interaction”, *Interaction of nomad culture and ancient civilisations* – Almaty: Science 1989, p.88)

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All this began many centuries ago. Legend has it that a wolverine saved a little boy whose family had been killed by enemies. She brought him to her lair in the eastern Tian Shan Mountains where she nurtured him and eventually became the mother of his ten children. When they grew up the children took wives, and one of the wolverine’s grandsons was named Ashina. In the Sogdian and Saka languages this word denotes shades of blue. If Romulus and Remus were brought up by a wolverine and took power through battle and Romulus founded Rome through killing his brother Remus, then the children of another wolverine were the great-grandparents of many Eurasian peoples who to

this day retain a strong ancestral consciousness. It is no coincidence that the wolf cult exists throughout Turkic cultures and sky blue is the background colour of our national flag.

In the second half of the sixth century the word "Turk" was used for the first time and it went on to become widespread. Before the founding of the kaganate "Turk" meant a union of ten, and later twelve, tribes, who had existed around 460 CE in the Altai. And so the Turkic El was born

The first Turkic kaganate (552-603) had economic and political relations with Byzantium, Iran and China. At its period of greatest expansion the Turkic kaganate stretched from Manchuria to the Gulf of Kerch, from the Upper Yenisei to the Upper Amur. And so the Turkic kagans became the founders of the first Eurasian empires.

In 552 the great Turkish *yabgu* Boumin was lifted onto a white felt rug to become kagan of the huge empire. His dynasty strengthened the Turkic state in Central Asia and southern Siberia, and the Chinese emperor paid dues to him. In my view, the expansion of the area of domination by Turkic tribes over the course of the following centuries was due to geographical factors. The expanse of middle Eurasia was not divided by internal natural barriers. The steppe, crossed by its rivers, stretched from the Carpathians and the northern Black Sea area almost as far as the Pacific Ocean. Here, existence directly depended upon the expansion of living space. Unlike European states, the steppe people were not separated from their neighbours by forbidding geographical barriers. The potential for rapid movement across distance guaranteed their basic way of life, and this demanded a constant expansion of territory.

The wide steppe belt of Eurasia, of which Kazakhstan occupies a part, from Khuankhe to the Carpathians, the deserts of Central Asia and Eastern Turkestan, and the tundra of Eurasia – all these vast lands could only be secured by nomadic pastoral-

ism. Camels, horses and sheep served as means of transport and provided milk, meat, hides and wool, i.e. the basic material requisites of food, clothing and habitation.

Despite the multifaceted nature of the nomadic world, it was unified by a common type of culture and production. In exploring to the limits of the Great Steppe the nomads would penetrate and occupy a territory through military conquest of the settled agrarian population.

Pastoralism and the necessity of constant defence against enemy attack required that each man – and in crises each woman too – become a warrior. The nomads were skilled horsemen, capable of covering great distances, and excelled in the use of weapons and mounted warfare.

They devoted less time to securing their vital material necessities than the settled populations, as most of their time was dedicated to military exercise. To this day, the Turkic peoples display their nomadic heritage in their great aptitude for mounted sports: *azhirid* for the Turks, *baiga* and *kokpar* for the Kazakhs. *Dzhigitovka* is another legacy of the military training of the past. However, in comparison to settled peoples both in antiquity and the Middle Ages, the nomads were weakened by their class structure, which involved the prolonged retention of patriarchal and clan relations. Social inequality in nomad society, as in all traditional societies, did not present a problem. Its existence was accepted as a part of the divine order.

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Through invasions of countries with settled populations, nomad chiefs – *shanyus*, kagans, khans, emirs, sultans – exercised their power in the subjugation of entire states. Huge nomad nations arose: the Syunni or Huns, the Turks and the Mongols. Ancient and medieval history knows of few easier victories than

those of the nomads over settled peoples. But the nomads enjoyed their greatest successes when they faced weak opponents, whether civilisations in crisis or states divided by internal warfare. This contributed to the success of nomad-warriors, including those from Central Asia – the Turks and the Mongols.

The point was proved by the Huns of Attila in the Western Roman Empire. The Turks, appearing in the eleventh century in Asia Minor, easily conquered Byzantium which was weakened by internal wars. The state of Khorezm-shakhov was rent by internal contradictions and the principality of Rus in the thirteenth century could not withstand the Mongols.

The empires of the nomadic peoples, famed from East to West, rapidly adopted new types of weaponry and military equipment. For example, the armies of Genghis Khan used Chinese wall-breaking munitions to storm European cities.

But the most important factor in guaranteeing military victory of the nomads over settled populations was the widespread use of the horse in battle. This was a revolutionary breakthrough in military affairs. Since the first millennium BCE the basic and perhaps only means of nomadic warfare was on horseback, employing the massed charge as a battle tactic. In the middle of the first millennium CE the Turks began to use saddles and stirrups and this greatly enhanced their military capability.

Such were the times. In order to survive, every nomad had to know how to handle weapons and be constantly prepared to engage in battle. It seems to me that after the passing of so many centuries of history, it is a thankless task to try to distinguish the just from the guilty, the aggressors from the peace-lovers. Every people takes pride in its heroes, who include both aggressors and defenders.

The authors of antiquity often remarked on the military superiority of the Turkic peoples. There is the interesting *Letter to Fatkh B Khakan on the qualities of the Turks and all the troops of the caliphate* written by al-Dzhakhiz, a famous author of the ninth century, during the reign of the caliph Mutawakkil (847-861). Fatkh B Khakan was the chief favourite of the caliph, who was a famed patron of poets and scholars. He was killed by conspirators in 861 along with Mutawakkil. Fatkh B Khakan described a majlis which had discussed the qualities of the various different sections of the caliphate troops. No one at this majlis could describe the qualities of the Turks, so Fatkh B Khakan turned to al-Dzhakhiz with a request to describe their qualities.

This is what the Arab author replied: "There are no people on earth besides the Turks for whom the presence of separate military leaders is more detrimental. The Turks have an aversion to differences in opinion, which can only result in secret rivalries, mutual hatred between peers [in ranking], and the shifting of blame and responsibility from one person to another. It is a duty for all participants to be united.

"When they face a military opponent who is in a position of weakness the Turks immediately take advantage; but if there is no weakness and [the opponent] has something the Turks desire [that is, booty] and it is advisable to retreat, then with one mind they recognise the justness of this action. Their thoughts arise simultaneously and are of one accord.

"They do not study the Koran, nor do they compete with each other in composing verses. And in truth [their chief] quality is that they take care of their own business. Also the differences between them are not great."

He writes further (p. 234) that "their one goal is to look after themselves, to drive away evil and encroachments [that is, from

enemies] and guard against intrigue." (p.237) "The Turks are a people who do not employ flattery, trickery, two-facedness, slander, preference, gossip, hypocrisy, superciliousness in relation to friends or haughtiness towards neighbours."

(Mandelstam, AM, *The Characteristics of the Turks of the ninth century in "Writings to Fatkh B Khakan"*, al-Dzhakhiz//Labour Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography. TI, Archaeology – Almaty 1956).

As LN Gumilev writes: "(The Arabs) rapidly advanced through the oases of the Middle East, but as soon as they went out onto the steppe they came up against the Turks and Turgesh (Turgesh were a type of western Turk) who stopped their advance. They rejected the Arab offer of Islam. The Khan of the Tyurgesh Sulu replied proudly, 'My men are all warriors, and who are yours? Artisans, cobblers and merchants. We do practise those trades, therefore your faith would not suit us.'" (Gumilev, LN, *Geographical Ethnicity in the Historic Period*. L, 1990, p. 60).

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The unity of the Turks was noted by many authors. To the present day this quality is underestimated as a factor in the rapid spread of the Turkic world across Eurasia. The demise of the early Turkic states was closely connected to a loss of internal unity rather than to external influences.

There is an ancient runic text, carved in stone in 731 in honour of Bilge Kagan and Kul Tegin. It reads: "Due to the untrustworthiness of the beys and the people, treachery and intriguers from China, younger brothers quarrelling with their elder brothers, and the people with their beys, the Turkic people wrought destruction on the state that had existed until now and brought death to the ruling kagan," (Klyashtorny SG, Sultanov TA, *Kazakhstan. Notes on Three Thousand Years* St Petersburg. 1992,

p.392; *History of Kazakhstan*, TI Almaty, "Almatua", 1996, p.392).

Unity, an advanced means of production, and optimal organisation of the armed forces enabled the Turks to establish a vast state and exert an enormous influence on the course of world history. It is precisely these three elements which contributed to the power of our ancestors and which were noted by the majority of medieval authors.

The combination of these qualities enabled the nomad peoples to expand into the most diverse corners of Eurasia. Apart from the movement of the Arabs during the wars of the seventh to thirteenth centuries and Europeans during the period of colonial expansion, no settled people or group of peoples have been able to spread out on such a vast scale. During the ancient Turkic period the nomads built a new steppe bridge from Central Asia to the borders of Byzantium. The nomadic empires spread over these expanses, mingling with each other over the course of centuries. They exerted enormous influence on the ethno-genesis of many peoples, and established multifaceted cultural complexes.

This was a new type of civilisation which preserved its features up until the first third of the twentieth century. What lay at the basis of this widespread distribution of the equestrian nomadic civilisation of Turkic peoples?

First, pastoralism was an efficient means of production that helped the nomads conquer large expanses. Traditional nomadic society acquired an effective mastery of the steppe, desert and semi-desert.

Second, the nomads established close and mutually advantageous contacts with settled agricultural populations.

Third, the Turks developed the art of war to a high degree. The ordinary nomad was not only an animal herder but a warrior. Mobility, experience in journeying for great distances and seizure of vast territories gave the nomads an advantage over

settled peoples in learning new military innovations and foreign inventions.

But the most important factor in securing tactical military superiority over settled peoples was the widespread practice of mounted warfare. It was a revolutionary innovation in the art of war, giving the Central Asian steppe nomads military superiority over settled peoples. This superiority lasted right up to the widespread introduction of firearms.

The empire founded by the Turks – the Turkic kaganate – although it was a product of warfare, played a distinctly civilising role in the long term. The famous expert on the Turkic peoples, LN Gumilev, noted: “In as far as the borders of the kaganate reached Byzantium in the west, India and Persia in the south and China in the east, so the turbulent histories of these countries... are linked to the fate of the Turkic state. Its formation was a turning point in human history, because to that point the cultures of the Mediterranean and Far East had been disconnected, although they were aware of one another’s existence. The endless steppe and mountain ranges impeded relations between East and West. Only the later introduction of metal harnesses, replacing carriages, allowed caravans to make their way through the deserts and passes with comparative ease.

One of the ancient means of communication was the great Silk Road which functioned as a regular artery for trade and diplomacy. Caravans of silks travelled across the lands of the Turks to the West, and goods from Central Asia, the Near and Middle East, and the Mediterranean went to China. The significance of this bridge went far beyond the bounds of strictly material exchanges between two areas of the world. In the ancient era it linked different cultures and peoples, serving as a route for the constant exchange of ideas.

The Turkic kaganate, which played such a prominent role in ancient history, will soon reach the age of 1450. This event will

be celebrated in many countries. Several international conferences and forums dedicated to studying the legacy of the great Turkic civilisation have already taken place. We all have something to be proud of. Our ancestors left deep historical imprints; their legacy has a powerful effect on the lives of the peoples of the Eurasian continent.

The peoples of our countries have the right to be proud of their great ancestors, particularly the first kagans. The achievements of Boumin, Istemi, Bilge Khan and Kul Tegin are the equal of any great military leader or statesman of antiquity.

In the social and political sphere the undoubted achievements of the ancient Turkic civilisations consisted of the formation of new socio-political structures of society. The aristocracy of the empire under the kagan played a leading role within these. According to ancient Turkic writings their main duty was to "feed the people". The engraving of a funeral eulogy of a dead kagan declares: "He fed his people well." The concentration of power in the hands of the kagan and the steppe aristocracy gave them political and historical responsibility for the fate of their nation.

As a result of deeper and broader contacts with the civilisations of Central Asia, Iran and Byzantium the ancient Turks developed a new type of culture with an original runic script. More than two hundred relics of this ancient Turkic writing have been discovered by scholars in the Altai, eastern Turkestan and Semirechie, in Khakassi and in Tuva. These provide evidence of the beginning of the formation of the ancient Turkic civilisation as a result of great cultural advances at the end of the sixth century. A distinctive feature of ancient Turkic culture was its formation on a local basis.

The physical and psychological mobility of the nomads in early times became important factors in the dynamic development of their world. Technical innovations allowed them to make

a great advance in the sphere of communications, broadening the horizons of their world.

The runic alphabet was linked to the edict of Istem Kagan at the end of the sixth century on the broadening of international relations, specifically to facilitate intricate diplomatic talks with Byzantium.

Because of its simplicity, which enabled it to be widely learned, the Turkic alphabet spread rapidly across a vast area.

The Altaic language family, to which the language of our people belongs, is one of the most important in the world. Its distribution in antiquity and the Middle Ages was linked to the journeys of the Central Asian nomads.

In the ethno-genetic sphere the formation of the Central Asian state of the Great Turkic El led to the formation of a great steppe society, characterised by the unity of its language, customs and traditions.

This confederation of Turkic tribes created a powerful state with brilliant forms of cultural expression. This provided favourable conditions for the development of an original culture which preserved its own economic social and religious traits right up to the end of the eighth century.

On the spiritual level this period saw an awakening of the historical consciousness of the eastern nomads.

As they entered into a deep and continual state of mutual cooperation, the nomadic and settled worlds could no longer develop without each other.

* * *

The Turks manifested a unique ability to assimilate the achievements of other cultures and to adapt them to their own conditions. Theirs was not an isolated, enclosed culture. Muslims who encountered the Turks noted their astonishing ability to find

a common language with surrounding peoples. This facility of the Turks operated independently of whether they arrived in a new country as conquerors or as guests, as mercenaries or as prisoner-of-war slaves; no matter what the circumstance they were more successful in carving out careers for themselves than people from other countries (Gumilev, LN, *The Ancient Turks*, p.149)

The human being occupied the centre of the Turkic universe. The world of people, of humanity, formed the pantheon of Turkic spirituality. Thus, on a fragment from *The Great Address in honour of Kul Tegin* was written:

“In the beginning there was the blue sky of heaven
And down below the dark earth:
And between them appeared the sons of man.”

The human being was the nucleus of the Turkic universe. Human life, the life of the individual, full of passions, desires, achievements and events, was inseparable from the life of the state and society. Therefore, history was understood through an analogy with the actual life of a human being, elevating the latter to a high level of historical significance.

Turks valued human qualities above all else. If a warrior distinguished himself by courage and bravery he could become a *batyr*, even if he did not belong to the steppe aristocracy.

In speech, narrators with sharp and lively minds became the preservers of the memory of the people (*akyns*). Rulers allowed the more famous and respected *akyns* to speak the mind of the people in their presence.

Steppe democracy created independent elected judges, the *biy*. Leaders of clan subdivisions were also elected. There was equality for women and an absence of religious fanaticism.

The patriarchal family, clan relations and the unwritten code of common law were stable social mechanisms for the transmission of social, ethnic and collective memory of the people. The

traditions of the clan were preserved in the consciousness of the individual, as the way of life did not allow him to live otherwise than in the collective. The amazing vitality of habits and rites, norms and prescriptions of the people were thus retained until this day.

At the same time, each individual had a historic and cultural memory connected to that of the whole people of the endless expanses of the Great Steppe.

The main carrier and preserver of spiritual values was the clan elder. He embodied living history and was considered a wise teacher-guide. In nomadic society the power of the elder was a form of social organisation that extended the ritual mechanism of interconnection between past and present generations.

The steppe gave rise to a specific spirit and world-view; from this arose the dynamism of the Turkic soul. This is expressed in excerpts from epic literature – the encoding of an ancestral memory, within which is contained all the intermingled peoples of the vast steppe.

The epic literature of the Turkic world is of prime significance for the understanding of the unified history and culture of the modern Turkic people. Collective property since ancient times, it has accompanied the people throughout the centuries of their historic development. Even when they were involuntarily separated from each other the epics united the Turkic world in the very hardest times. The Turks preserved their collective historical memory, spirituality and overall cultural identity even under the difficult conditions of the totalitarian regime. Now we have the opportunity to appreciate fully the significance of the great figures among the modern Turkic people such as M Auezov, Ch. Aitmatov and others who understood that without the preservation of a pan-Turkic base the Turkic people could lose their historical memory.

The stable mental qualities of the Turks enabled them to preserve their cultural identity in the face of the most challenging conditions. As the twelfth-century Arab historian Fakhreddin Mubarakshakh noted: “the Turk is like a pearl in an oyster shell, which has no value while it remains in its abode, but when it is prised open from the shell, it shows its worth...”

Nomad consciousness absorbed all the lands that they conquered. The epics and legends of the nomad people testify to this. The geographical boundaries of the world of folklore were enormous. And, what is more surprising, passages show that the mysticism which characterises even late European scientific and geographical imagination is absent.

Popular oral creations devoted much attention to the moral quest of the individual, his relations with other people, the questions of birth, life and death, growing up and ageing, relations between old and young, parents and children, and so on. The experience of the organisation of the nomadic way of life, the basic characteristics of which were the moral principles of respect towards one’s clan elders and care for one’s peers, took the form of a specific code of moral and practical directives.

Up until our times there existed a widespread notion, including in science, that the change from isolated existence in localised societies to the mass interaction and interconnection between peoples occurred only with the beginning of industrialised societies.

But we must acknowledge the immutable historical fact that the movement of nomadic society from the East to the West was one of the first global human feats of uniting localised societies at different stages of economic development, with differing forms of social organisation, culture, mentality, race and ethno-cultural parameters. This was the achievement of the Great Turkic El.

In the middle Turkic era (tenth to fifteenth centuries) the Turks were one of the most active peoples of the times, regardless of all the turmoil and catastrophe caused by the devastating invasions of the armies of Genghis Khan. The Turkic-speaking tribes spread out through Central and Southern Asia and Asia Minor, Siberia and Eastern Europe. They reached the heights of development of their times and were a driving force in human civilisation.

In the tenth and eleventh centuries there was no significant external threat from the great powers of the East and West. These conditions permitted the peaceful development of life and the growth of highly developed states in the region. The most powerful of these were those of the Samanids, Kara-khanids and Ghaznavids with their mix of Turkic and Iranian populations. In those periods the population reached five to seven million. This comparatively small number of people reached the heights of economic and cultural development during the period.

Arab invasions exerted an enormous influence on the socio-economic, political and cultural lives of the peoples of Central Asia.

One of the most important changes in everyday life was the spread of a new state religion, Islam, along with the Arab language and script. The introduction of a single language to the vast territory drew peoples at different levels of development and ways of life into a single religious and political whole, and facilitated the development of culture, the creative unification of the traditions of whole peoples, coming from the caliphate and so renewing the cultural values of antiquity.

For the second time after the Turkic kaganate, the territory of its heirs was once again able to fulfil its role as a bridge between the East and the West, linking the remote and distant classical

civilisations of China and India with far-flung western areas of the European continent (Islamic Spain). This in turn exerted a huge influence on the history of the Near East itself and, through this, influenced the Mediterranean cultures. Through these links and its preservation of ancient culture, the kaganate played a role in the European Renaissance.

The widening of links between the Caliphate and China, India and the Mediterranean countries consisted not only in the trading of goods and technical innovations but also in the fruitful exchange of different systems of ideas. So, for the duration of the whole era the medieval essayist al-Farabi enjoyed great popularity in Western Europe and undoubtedly contributed to the Renaissance. And over the course of ten centuries Europe has made use of the medical encyclopaedia of Avicenna, who in his general political views largely followed those of the scholars of Otrar.

In the Middle Ages the peoples of Central Asia created a high culture, with distinctive architecture, colourful decorative arts, poetry and epic literature.

The Arabic alphabet was adopted at this time. Otrar, Taraz and other cities became powerful centres of culture which combined local tradition with the highest achievements of world culture. Such brilliant scholars as the encyclopaedist al-Farabi and the mathematician and astronomer Abbas Dzhaukhari lived and worked in this period.

Al-Farabi was the founder of many arts and sciences in the fields of mathematics, architecture and music. The socio-ethical tracts in which he expounds on the virtues of states and sovereigns still resonate. Al-Farabi was the true founder of Arab philosophy – the first philosopher of the East. His works exerted enormous influence on such medieval thinkers of the East as Nizami Gandzhevi, Omar Khayyam and Alisher Navoi.

To their names can be added that of the great scholar al-Khorezmi (780-847), the leading mathematician of the Middle

Ages, whose works were brought to Islamic Spain in Latin and formed the basis of mathematics in Europe. The terms "logarithm" and "algorithm" were derived from his name. Al-Khorezmi acquainted himself with the great achievements of Indian mathematicians. He introduced the zero symbol and the written numerals that we use today. Al-Khorezmi founded algebra, the name of which comes from his book *Al-dzhebr*. He also studied astronomy, and created tables of sines and tangents.

Among the great scholars of the time was al-Biruni. Mathematician and geographer, astronomer and biochemist, builder and poet, al-Biruni was the shining star of the Middle Ages. The gifts the eleventh century has passed on to us today were bestowed by two great men, equal to the giants of the European Renaissance. The first half of the century is known as the era of Biruni, and the second the era of Omar Khayyam, poet and mathematician, astronomer and philosopher.

The tenth and eleventh centuries saw a flowering of Turkic literature. Firdusi, Bukhari, Samarkandi and other great poets wrote in Tadjik. Yusuf Balasaguni and Hodzha Akhmet Yassau wrote in Turkish.

The great thinkers of the medieval East, Yusuf Balasaguni and Mahmood Kashgari, were Turks in origin. They made an invaluable contribution to the study of the history of the Turkic peoples, their culture, language, customs and traditions.

In particular, Balasaguni, living in the eleventh century, wrote one of the most important literary memoirs of the time, *Kutadgu Bilig* ("Beneficial Knowledge"). It was the first sacred book of the Turkic-speaking peoples of Central Asia.

The *Divan-lugat-at-Turk* ("Dictionary of Turkic speech") by Mahmood Kashgari is invaluable. Besides being a scientific record of the times, this work carries a great store of historical linguistic knowledge, and is an invaluable memoir of the lives and tastes of the Turkic people. The idea of compiling a Turkic diction-

ary of research was connected to the growing importance of the Turkic language among the peoples of the Muslim world.

Hodzha Akhmet Yassau was a gifted twelfth-century thinker living in the town of Yassy (Turkestan). His name and works are deservedly celebrated and read throughout the Turkic-speaking world. He brought Islam to Kazakhstan, writing a book of poetry called *Divan-i-Khikmet* ("Book of Wisdom") in the Turkic language in which he advocates love towards the Almighty, humility and asceticism. He developed Sufism – his own distinct Turkic interpretation of the Koran.

Finally, in the first half of the fifteenth century a bright star flared up on the scientific horizon – the great astronomer, mathematician and powerful social activist Muhammed Ulugbek was the founder of the world's first observatory.

In this way the local population continued to preserve and develop their own ancient culture and writings while absorbing the new Arab achievements in education and culture. This is testament to the fact that, regardless of the powerful influence of the developed culture of the Arab world, the Turkic cultural tradition continued to thrive. In this era the powerful Turkic spirit was not extinguished. The Great Turkic El preserved its spiritual continuity and creative energy through the course of centuries.

* * *

In the eleventh to twelfth centuries the historical foundation for the formation of the modern Turkic peoples was laid on the territory of Central Asia. It came about under conditions of a common culture and mode of production, close linguistic ties between peoples and the cooperation of nomadic and semi-nomadic cattle-herders with settled farmers. Along with the development and establishment of statehood went the process of ethnic integration and of tribal unity based on a complex of ethno-

genetical ties. The invasions of Genghis Khan came at this stage of the socio-economic, ethno-political and cultural development of the Turkic people.

The Mongol expansion sharply curtailed the formation of indigenous nationhood in the lands of Central Asia. A merging of strong tribal groups ensued. Sections of the Turkic people were forced to travel beyond the boundaries of their traditional territory, finding themselves in other countries, from the Mediterranean to the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

A notable role in the history of the period was played by the Kypchak Turks, some of whom were taken prisoner by Mongols and sold into slavery, mostly in Egypt and India, where they were known as Mamelukes and *ghulams*. They reached the heights of power, creating an invincible opposition to the Mongol warriors, and defending the ancient cultures of Egypt and India from inevitable destruction.

Among the Turkic governors who succeeded in stopping the Mongols we may recall with pride such names as Beibars, Kaloun, An-Nasir in Egypt, Eltutmish, Paziiya and Balban in India.

And so the Mamelukes, having founded a powerful army, prevented the Mongols from crossing the borders of Egypt and saved Cairo from the fates of Damascus and Baghdad, where, according to al-Makrizi, "rivers of blood flowed through the streets" during the invasion of the Mongol Khulagu Khan. The Mameluke system, which in the second half of the thirteenth century was dominated by the Kypchaks, helped to unite the state, and kept the trade routes, especially to the Mediterranean, comparatively safe, regardless of the wars with the Mongols and the crusaders.

In the era of wars with the Mongols, Egypt, defended by Bakhri-Mamelukes, became, along with the sultanate of Delhi, the main refuge for Muslims.

The Turks exerted an enormous influence on the political construction of the Mongol empire. The empire of Genghis Khan was founded on the military-administrative system that had been born back in the Turkic kaganate. The Mongol forces formed divisions of a hundred, a thousand and a hundred thousand men. The population of the empire of Genghis Khan was also divided into correspondingly sized administrative units.

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The Turkic linguistic family of the Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Turkmen, Kirgiz and Karakal peoples testifies to the interrelatedness of the ethno-genetic and cultural processes of the entire Kazakh-Central Asian region in the distant past. All the Turkic peoples preserved in their historical memory the epic stories of *Ker-ogly* and *Korkyt-ata*, which blaze with patriotism, heroism and love of the fatherland.

The ethnic demarcation of the Kazakhs, Uzbeks and others which has come about since the late fifteenth century is the product of centuries-old deep ethno-genetic processes.

From the sixteenth century onwards we may speak not only of the tribes and of tribal unions of Central Asia, but also of the new ethno-political nature of this territory – the formation of nations of Turkic-speaking peoples bearing the names of their ethnic populations.

* * *

From the eighteenth century the Turkic peoples of Central Asia entered a period of permanent economic, socio-political and cultural crisis and have fell easy prey to other states who were expanding their own territories through colonisation.

In the north the Russian empire sought markets for its goods and sources of raw materials in an unequal economic exchange. It strengthened its military and political presence to the south and the east.

Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and the states of Central Asia were brought into the orbit of the colonial politics of the Russian empire. For the Turkic peoples this brought about a loss of national statehood with national and social oppression as a result of the politics of Russification.

The heaviest blow was the damage to national self-awareness. Colonisation slowed the natural-evolutionary transformation of the Turkic people into a modern nation.

One of the main tasks of the colonial regime was the fight against the Turkic peoples' recognition of their cultural, linguistic and historical-ethnic unity. Any attempt by enlightened groups or individuals to act against the colonial power on the spiritual level was punished.

Kazakhstan took a particularly heavy blow because of its geographical position. It was used as a vast military training ground for the colonisation of Central Asia and as a testing ground for the methods of colonial enslavement.

Under these difficult conditions a national and pan-Turkic consciousness awakened in some sections of the population. They developed progressive, enlightened ideas to counter backwardness and stagnation. Their basic mission was the enlightenment of the people. This era saw a whole galaxy of enlightened men. Chokan Valikhanov, Abai (in Kazakhstan), Donish, Furkat (in Uzbekistan), Mirza Akhunov, Said Shirvani (in Azerbaijan), Mollanepes (in Turkmenistan), Kalygul, Toktogul Saltylganov (in Kyrgyzstan) were stars of the first magnitude.

The imposition of the Soviet socio-political system was an event of huge significance in the history of the Central Asian peoples. The granting of formal independence to the Turkic peoples

of Central Asia had mixed results. On the one hand, there were advances in culture, science and education, and modern nations were formed; on the other, national statehood was limited to a strictly formal character and national languages were dropped from many spheres such as politics, economics and science. This sharply reduced the number of people who had a command of these languages. National self-awareness fell victim to the class-consciousness instilled by the totalitarian regime; the historical memory of the people was eroded, replaced by a history subordinated to official ideology. On a nationwide scale, politics brought about a change in the ethnic composition of the territory of the populations of Central Asia, by means of planned mass migration.

The republics of Central Asia were forced to remain a backward periphery of the totalitarian empire, shut off from the world by the Iron Curtain. Not being masters of their own historical destiny, the Turkic peoples were doomed to a slow extinction of their creative energy, a loss of their cultural and historical identity. Such an unenviable fate awaited the proud descendants of the Great Turkic El after fourteen centuries of turbulent history.

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The fall of the Soviet Union ushered in a new stage in the development of the Turkic peoples. After almost fifteen hundred years new independent states have arisen in the heart of the Turkic world; the remote provincial countries of Central Asia and Azerbaijan have formed states that have become interwoven into the thread of modern world history.

Whoever is aware of even the general outline of the history of the Turks must reach an optimistic conclusion about the long-term linguistic, cultural and historical prospects for our society. Having established a state unprecedented in world history four-

teen centuries ago, having suffered the depredations of colonisation, and having borne the burdens of totalitarian society, at the present time the Turkic world is presented with the relatively new historical perspective of independent nation states which fulfil the dream of centuries.

Regardless of the natural conflicts that arise in the path of national state construction, we must consider even more weighty problems whose solutions will help to strengthen our sovereignty.

In the cultural field we face the pressing task of developing the national culture of each independent Turkic state in the modern-day context, which is substantially limited by the principle of natural conformity to the historical process.

The modern era has proved the non-linearity of the historical process. Regardless of the thorny issues of national identity that have arisen in different regions, the natural global tendency is towards the formation of powerful centres of civilisation. This is a result of the globalisation of economic, cultural and informational processes which possess their own vision of the historical process.

In our view, at the present time in the Turkic world there are sufficient preconditions for us to address this issue. There is a need for dialogue between the Turkic independent states, participating on an equal level, about different ethno-cultural systems, national forms, the world and their centuries of historical development which have raised this problem to the level of modern history. The level of modern national self-awareness of the representatives of the Turkic world today will enable them to succeed in this task.

In practice, the majority of people lack a full and adequate perception of our concrete economic and political imperatives. Relations with one process or another which take place in society are always refracted through the prism of national consciousness

and culture. The head of state, in recognising his historic responsibility before all his people, has no right to ignore this.

As was noted above, the Turkic world was always a connecting artery between peoples and cultures. Now, when I consider our general cultural and historical destiny, I do not speak of a separation from other cultural nuclei. In the course of time the modern Turkic world in uniting and developing its cultural potential will surely come to be known as the "Turkic-Islamic civilisation."

But, whatever it may be called, my deep belief is that it will essentially provide a historical example of a gentle transition from one stage of civilisation to another.

More precisely, the Turkic-Islamic world will form a bridge for the mutual cultural enrichment for the following complexes of civilisation: a) the West; b) the Arab-Iranian world; c) Russia; d) China.

An understanding of the great historical mission before us puts us in a situation of enormous responsibility, and demands that we direct all our strength and efforts towards its fulfilment. The united strength of our countries depends on the following questions. Will the future of the region consist completely of contradictions and different approaches to the task of building the nation state? Will the region split and crack along lines of different national cultural interpenetration? Or will we emerge with a consciousness of the urgent need to strengthen Turkic unity into a single complex of civilisation and culture so that we do not become lost in the turbulent waters of modern history? For only then, under the defence and protection of our common cultural identity, will we fulfil our moral duty to our common ancestors and likewise our descendants?

The call of history places before each Turkic nation the necessity of forming institutional mechanisms capable of uniting the political, economic, cultural and humanitarian spheres of our existence.

If we evaluate the idea of the unity of the Turkic world from the position of the present day, then it may seem that the potential for this integration and mobilisation is very small. But if we look from a wider perspective, then history proves that each Turkic people is an organic part of the Turkic cultural world.

In the course of history, it is probable that the cultural landscape will change with the expansion of the economic and political roles of the Central Asian states.

The Turkic peoples, acting as a united whole, will be able to influence geopolitics from a position of equality and participate in cultural relations on the global stage not as passive elements but on a truly equal level. The first step in this direction is the establishment of a union of Central Asian countries with the aim of establishing our common cultural identity. I think such an integrative body must be open to all, including non-Turkic countries, since to shut ourselves off from others would mean cultural isolation and stagnation.

It is precisely in such a dialogue of civilisations that each culture rediscovers its identity and returns to its sources, whose true values it discovers through the process of intercultural contacts.

A significant step forward would be to publish an encyclopaedia of Turkic peoples, to construct a modern pantheon of Turkic peoples to commemorate the great individuals and the principal events of Turkic history, and to found an international Centre for the study of Turkic questions.

* * *

Now we have the chance to evaluate accurately the cultural universe that floats in the historical space around us, the black holes that gape within it and the constellations of famous names and unknown millions who will gain the power of speech and vision through our tongues and our eyes.

* * *

However as far as the other ethnic groups of Kazakhstan are concerned the extremely rich and historically deep Kazakh cultural tradition still remains a mystery of the seven seals. How can the rich melodies of Kurmangaz, the scintillating lyrics of Magzhan, the epic prose of Mukhtar, the amazing discoveries of Chokan Valikhanov and the philosophical innovations of Abai not enrich the inner world of each person who comes into contact with their spiritual wealth? Without an appreciation of these pinnacles of the Kazakh cultural universe one cannot understand the soul of the people. In order not to live in a parallel universe full of false stereotypes, it is important to step into this extraordinary cultural stream freely, openly and without constraint, and without administrative or ideological pressure. The very topography of the Kazakh steppe is saturated with poetry, humour and historical drama. The Kazakh world with its centuries-old traditions of endless improvisation speaks volumes about the people, about their depths and their wisdom. To deny such riches under the false pretence that it might infringe upon the interests of another group would be to misunderstand the very nature of the cultural process itself. In contrast to material goods, culture has an extraordinary quality – it does not fragment but expands according to the number of its consumers. Only by freely and respectfully studying the Kazakh language and culture will we achieve overall national consolidation.



THE CULTURAL
PERSPECTIVE

*Knowledge may belong to the brain of the scholar,
but wisdom is the breath
of the people.*

George Woodberry

Kazakhstan is a multi-ethnic state. In the cultural sense this presents some fairly complex issues for a democratic government.

One of these is the implementation of legal measures that will guarantee the smooth development and functioning of all national cultures. Nizami, Goethe, Toukai, Shevchenko, Rustaveli, Navoi, Kolas and Aini are more than names from school literature classes, they live in the souls of many of our fellow citizens. Relations with the ethnic minorities within Kazakhstan are very carefully fostered. This is entirely appropriate for the type of society that we are building on our ancient Kazakh soil.

It follows that the cultural reality of the future Kazakhstan must not be a mechanistic assemblage of different national cultures, with a separate and autonomous Kazakh culture on the one hand, and on the other an amorphous collection of the remnants of cultures in the Diaspora. This would surely condemn us to provincialism.

In truth, it is enough to consider the simple fact that each minority exists as a small part of its ethnic group, and therefore regards its culture merely as a fragment of the ethnic mother culture. Furthermore, the rate of development of the ethnic motherland is often different from that of the political, legal and geopolitical conditions of the countries in which the minorities live.

In the final analysis, the rate of isolated development of minorities within the framework of the greater Kazakh cultural sphere only magnifies differences and cultural distances between national groups. This leads to the one-sided development of the specific traits of each ethnic culture and will fail to bring together all the members of this new society who are, simply and significantly, Kazakhs.

* * *

The prospect of lagging behind, even by the standards of your own “ethnic mother culture” to be out on some cultural periphery, is an unenviable position for an ethnic group. What is more, the government of Kazakhstan grants freedom of choice in cultural orientation.

The problem lies elsewhere, in the fact that the “mother culture” may exist quite independently of the culture of its ethnic Diaspora. The former has a whole range of institutions which promote its development to the full, whereas the cultural Diaspora is of an incidental nature as far as the ethnic mother culture is concerned. Of course, in history there have been significant instances of the participation of Diasporas in the cultural processes of their ethnic motherland, for example the French culture of Algeria influenced that of France. However, one should not exaggerate the significance of such cultural influences. Even in the USSR, under conditions of a united country, the influence of the Diasporas on the culture of their ethnic “alma maters” was not great.

At the same time a cultural Diaspora always exerts a huge influence on the formation of the cultural landscape of its host country. Is it more realistic today to see oneself as a part of the complex of culture and civilisation of the country of one’s citizenship, of one’s residence, or to regard oneself only as a part of the Russian, Armenian or German cultures, brought by the will of fate to the expanse of the Kazakh steppe? In my view, the answer is self-evident.

Ties with the ethnic motherland, including cultural links, are the legal right of every ethnic group living in the territory of Kazakhstan. Our political system was built with the help of these links. However, we are talking here of something else – of the strategic direction of the cultural development of the single multi-ethnic state in which we live.

* * *

If we are talking about our united historical destiny, about the nature of our active participation within new and already existing coordinates of geography and culture, then why should our civilisation and culture not emerge into the world in a new and integrated form?

Here we face two options. The first is the existence of Kazakh national culture parallel to the remnants of ethnic minority cultures, which would result in the “provincialism” of the culture as a whole.

The second choice is a cultural synthesis based on dialogue between national-cultural systems which will result in the formation of a common Kazakh culture. For this, of course, it is necessary to anticipate clearly that ethnic minorities will study Kazakh culture as seriously as Kazakhs once studied Russian culture.

* * *

As far as strategic perspectives for development are concerned, it is clear that modern Kazakh culture amounts to more than the tradition of *akyns* and folkloric celebrations. Modern Kazakh culture is represented by a whole range of cultural institutions – from professional theatre to opera, from architectural schools to postmodernist works of art. So to imagine Kazakh culture as no more than early twentieth-century poetry and mid-century socialist realism novels against a background of traditional arts, is to ignore its complexity and advanced, innovative nature. But some narrow-minded proponents of “the purity of Kazakh national culture” directly harm the culture, refusing to admit new life into the astoundingly dynamic phenomenon that is the cultural manifestation of the Kazakh spirit.

Representatives of all national groups in Kazakhstan must understand the simple truth that Kazakh culture is not only Abai and *dombra*, not even Mukhtar Auezov or Magzhan Zhumabaev. Kazakh culture of the twentieth century has one of the leading schools of composers, including Mykan Tulebaev and Gazin Zhubanov. It has singers who could grace the stage of any of the world's opera houses – from Yermek Serkebaev to Alibek Dhishev. It includes the work of young Kazakh artists and the findings of Kazakh philosophers, the ethnological concepts of Alkei Margulan, the architectural ensembles of Almaty, the lyrics of Mukagal Maktaev and the aesthetics of Askar Suleimenov. Far from being some externally imposed cliché it is an enormous world which enables one to understand the precise nature of the Kazakhs themselves.

* * *

However, there is another side to the question. Kazakh culture itself must have an open character and be prepared to accept cultural innovation. It must not cling on to the hackneyed and trite, however emotionally dear. Any art historian will affirm that work which once seemed avant-garde eventually passed into cliché. Today, when there is a sharp acceleration of information and global pressure it is impossible to remain seated in the “nomadic field”. But nor must one turn one's back on native culture.

The task consists of the acquisition of new cultural experience, the national-cultural integration of new works that are being created daily. We face serious questions, such as: how will Kazakh culture and the next generation be affected by the widespread study of English in the twenty-first century? How will the work of Kazakh writers be influenced by the society of mass information and entry into the global informational network?

What will be the effects of rapid and widespread urbanisation of Kazakh society? How will the psychology of the age of market values affect the consciousness of the new generation of artists?

Time has an insidious trait of arriving without warning. One must be ready to meet its challenges. Here there is no place for feeble confusion or groundless optimism. The national consciousness must respond appropriately to the literal collapse of the old type of social organisation without losing itself in the process.

* * *

For the construction of an overall Kazakh cultural model these considerations are of prime importance. In drawing up a workable cultural plan for Kazakhstan we must not be limited by our state cultural system. We must work from the principle of openness and inclination towards dialogue with other streams of culture.

If we look clearly and dispassionately towards the future, we see that minorities within Kazakhstan will not only exist as sections of the ethnic culture of their motherland, but will also become powerful representatives of the culture of Kazakhstan. They form one of the channels, the mechanisms of our interrelation with the national cultural systems of other states. The huge role played by ethnic minorities must not be underestimated; its positive significance will be seen in the future. Representatives of the most powerful peoples of this planet live in the territory of Kazakhstan. At the same time they are our fellow citizens and in this sense they are Kazakhs first and foremost.

Mutual influences and interpenetrations of cultures follow a natural path: Russians in Kazakhstan have quite a different mentality from those in Russia. This applies equally to Koreans, Ukrainians and others. There are many examples of "our" Russians who, on moving back to Russia, were unable to live among "their own folk".

* * *

Among the darker episodes of the close of the second millennium was the trauma to Russian consciousness inflicted by the establishment of new independent states. Russians in Central Asia, the Caucasus, Ukraine and Moldova experienced a huge psychological blow in relation to their cultural identity, which at its height spilled over into political protest. Many cynics from political buffoons to perfectly respectable figures exploited this psychological blow. The problem was that they were unable to address the real issues that faced the Russian populations in the Diaspora and after the ensuing election campaigns their problems were forgotten.

These problems are very complex.

Without an understanding of our recent history it is impossible to grasp the reasons for the cultural and psychological malaise of the Russian Diaspora within the countries of the CIS. Russians were an exterritorial people within the boundaries of the former Soviet Union. The Soviet political system drove the Russian nation into this situation, and today this has heavy repercussions for those who find themselves in the new independent states.

The legacy of their exterritoriality means that Russian opportunities for expanding their ethno-cultural spheres within the various "former Soviet" nations are smaller than those for other ethnic groups. A paradox arises. On the one hand, the Russians were the first among equals; on the other, the mechanisms of ethno-cultural identity of these Russians have been eroded. Russians rarely enter into serious dialogue with the cultures of the new independent states. This exterritorial situation guaranteed the formation of a comfortable ethno-cultural sphere for the independent regions, from the Baltics to the Far East, from Termez to the Bering Straits. But within this area the ethno-cultural identity of the Russian people is not supported at a government

or institutional level. During the Soviet years Russia did not have its own party organisations, a ministry of defence, an Academy of Science and so on. Far from being a formality, this was a reflection of the fact that the idea of a separate Russian national identity was anathema to the totalitarian regime. In other words, even in Russia itself the mechanisms for the cultural identification for the Russian people were by no means ideal.

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What followed in a psychological sense for the Russian Diaspora after 1991? The old practice of cultural disconnection was no longer acceptable. For decades Russians lived side by side with native populations but only weakly responded to the contents of the national parameters in terms of knowledge of the language, culture and religion. The new conditions prompted a surge of discontent which at times erupted into parliamentary battles and at times into crueller forms. Today, after the passage of several years, we can say that the Russian sense of ethnic deprivation was a product of their exterritorial situation.

If we recall the cruel economic crisis of the first years of independence we must add the discontent arising from the fall in living standards. And the crisis began to define itself in terms of national discrimination.

With certain reservations, we can distinguish two stages in the development of the self-awareness of the Russian Diaspora. The first two or three years after the fall of the Soviet Union were particularly difficult. We shall explain the psychological shock. The Russian people simply refused to believe what had occurred because it went beyond their world of experience in terms of their past, present and future.

Their psychological frustration often expressed itself in denial of the new political realities. And it is not coincidental that

at precisely this period plans for the resurrection of the former state became popular and that there was a swing towards political extremism.

Islands of the practical and rational, in the form of the institutions of the old states, dissolved, while the building of new institutions which might rationalise the semantics of the new reality on new principles had only just begun.

A short-lived vacuum arose, into which poured powerful feelings of national discontent. These took the most peculiar forms. A plethora of poorly considered slogans emerged, concerning the lack of historical rights in the independent states of Kazakhstan, Ukraine and Moldova.

The characteristics of the first stage took the form of a constant search for civil identity with Russia without taking into account that Russia was a friendly but different country. The Russian search for its new identity is perfectly justified within Russia itself, but in the Diaspora led to a repetition and reanimation of past stereotypes. At the same time, Russia itself went far beyond the ideals of the totalitarian era in its intensive intellectual quest. And then the blaming began. Russian politicians were accused of being unconcerned about the problems of their fellow countrymen living abroad. In fact, the basic vector of Russian politics in relation to the Russian Diaspora abroad is fully in accord with modern standards of international relations. This is undoubtedly to the credit of the Russian political establishment, which was directing its politics in accordance with modern day realities and not following ancient footprints in the sand.

We must relate to this trauma of the Russian Diaspora with understanding, and not with the sort of negative attitude of the old social order, which would be inappropriate in the context of modern international relations.

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Today there has been a qualitative reappraisal of the events of the past. And the majority of the Russian population in Kazakhstan accepts its existence and development as an independent state. The changes in the cultural and political landscape of Kazakhstan demand serious institutional support and the political will of the state apparatus. The fact that we have been able to prevent inter-ethnic conflict speaks volumes about our success in this respect.

There has been a sharp reduction in the emigration of Russians from Kazakhstan. For example, in the past three years it has fallen by a factor of three. The mass adoption of Kazakh citizenship testifies to a qualitative change in attitude of one of the most powerful national groups towards the destinies of our state.

Beginning with law and ending with culture, a distinct compromise in our decision-making has been objectively predetermined. The lessons of our former statehood show that any attempt to unify this multifaceted ethno-culture into one form will fail. For the stable development of Kazakhstan, which from an overall perspective remains a multi-ethnic society, it is necessary for the state to provide legal guarantees and establish conditions conducive to the unimpeded development of the national cultural lives of the various ethnic groups that live in this territory.

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Speaking of this problem of the relation of the host nation to the Diaspora, we must address the question of the Kazakh Diaspora abroad.

Unfortunately, the social experiments of the twentieth century led to the mass exodus of Kazakhs from the land of their birth. So many cruel tragedies took place in the first decades of

this terrible century. Thousands of refugees from revolution and civil war perished in the deserts and on the frozen mountain passes from the Altai to the Pamirs, from Iran to China. The lives of hundreds of thousands of Kazakh refugees were ruined; many met an unknown fate. What sorrowful and humiliating paths were trodden by the mothers and fathers of the almost five million Kazakhs who today live beyond the borders of their homeland? No one is left to describe their experience in all its bitter glory. No documents remain. They were lost, along with whole convoys of refugees somewhere on the nameless heights, their remains lying in unmarked graves far beyond the boundaries of the Kazakh steppe. For the revolutionaries caught and murdered the refugees with senseless and incomparable cruelty, as though they were wild animals.

Today we are talking about the tragedies of forced resettlement. Yes, this is similarly unprecedented in world history both in scale and in cruelty. The tragedy played out on the Kazakh expanses led not only to deaths but also to the resettlement of a huge section of the population in foreign lands, and this demands accurate historical evaluation.

By the will of fate, Kazakhs ended up in the most diverse cultures and civilisations, from strict theocratic regimes to atheist states, from the Indian to the Arctic Oceans. They had to adapt to different laws, economic and cultural conditions and blend organically into the contemporary lives of the states in which they found themselves.

In the overwhelming majority of these countries the Kazakh language had no institutional safeguards. Nevertheless, Kazakhs were able to preserve their language and culture under these conditions. These Kazakhs, torn from their mother tongue and the culture of their own country, are worthy examples for imitation!

Demands may only be made on others after one has made them of oneself. This imperative applies not only to individual experience but also to that of whole peoples. And it is already appropriate to apply this demand to all multi-ethnic societies. Throughout the world, Kazakhs in the Diaspora have successfully mastered the culture, languages and customs of the countries in which they have lived for decades, and almost entirely without the help of political or nationalist movements.

In the course of post-war history there has been no uprising by a Kazakh population against a government of another country for ethnic or religious reasons.

This must serve as a worthy example for all Diasporas living in Kazakhstan. If we are speaking of the strivings of many Kazakhs to return to their motherland, then we are now able to offer conditions that are not worse than those provided for returnees by Germany and Israel. But we must not artificially stimulate a Kazakh exodus from their second motherland.

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It is characteristic for Kazakhs abroad to preserve their national self-awareness. Even in London where the Kazakh Diaspora is relatively small I remember how in April 1994 I was surrounded by groups of Kazakhs and how warmly and with what excitement they discussed the questions of development in their native land. And how many of these wonderful meetings there were in China too, and Iran, Mongolia, Russia, Turkey ... everywhere the Kazakh language lives.

The position of the state in relation to the Kazakh Diaspora is clearly defined. It offers cultural, economic and political support whilst observing the principles of territorial integrity and not interfering with the internal affairs of sovereign countries.

While everything is transparent enough in the legal sense, the internal culture of the Kazakh Diaspora is worthy of imitation not only in a formal sense but in purely human terms. The preservation of national identity and patriotism in relation to the country of which they are citizens – that is a developmental model for all national Diasporas within Kazakhstan itself. This is the only model worthy of a democratic state; any other would be fatal.

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Cultural relations between the ethnic minorities within Kazakhstan do not take place on the abstract plane of political theory. They operate on at least four levels: the interpersonal level; the level of national-cultural centres of the different ethnic groups which reaches its logical conclusion in the activities of the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan; the level of overall national state structures, including the clear regulation of the legislature; regional and sub-regional levels which include the religious bodies, principally of Islam and Christianity. Each of these levels provides solutions to problems and these must never be taken from one level to another. There have been attempts to take purely mundane types of conflict to the national-cultural level or to that of state politics. And then the mass consciousness witnesses street hooliganism as a “display of national politics”. This is a “sickness of substitution of theses”, which leads to all sorts of grotesque conclusions and is exploited by divisive politicians who are less interested in the well-being of their ethnic groups than in the cultivation of their own images as “defenders of the fatherland”.

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The complexities of multinational and multicultural interrelationships demand clear and comprehensible approaches. In this

sphere our internal politics are built upon a sober understanding of several conditions.

First, the multi-ethnic cultural face of Kazakhstan is not a fatal disadvantage but our great strength and potential for development.

Second, the huge potential for integration into Kazakh culture for every ethnic group of the country may be realised only through the open character of the Kazakh culture itself, the development of its institutional resources and capacity to respond to the exigencies of time.

Third, all national cultures of Kazakhstan are interlinked and interdependent. The diverse ethnic groups interconnect and complement each other within the cultural space of Kazakhstan.

We openly formulate and follow these principles without subterfuge or political gamesmanship.

Yes, many ill-fated Cassandras predicted ethnic chaos for Kazakhstan, above all for reasons of a cultural nature. Yes, the complex ethno-cultural component carries with it a potential for conflict. But besides well-run internal politics on the national question, circumstances in Kazakhstan were such that the interaction of cultures often developed not through the canon of totalitarian government but in spite of it. And this was hugely important. This prolonged experience of cultural contact, as superficial and limited as it was at times, had a very positive effect. Therefore, the conflict of cultural values does not mean inevitable disaster. And our task is to turn the multifaceted ethno-cultural nature of Kazakhstan into a positive factor for social development.

* * *

As far as the integrating role of Kazakh culture is concerned, this is pure pragmatism and not some sort of exercise in nationalism, on which the "learned experts" on Kazakh culture are wont

to discourse, without being able to name one significant person or event within the centuries-old Kazakh tradition.

It is the culture of the majority of the population of the country. It is a culture with a whole range of institutions. It is a culture that was genetically formed in this territory and which, to a huge degree, predetermines the characteristics of the historical development of the Kazakh state. Finally, it is the modern culture with all its attributes and its inclusion in the global cultural process.

Therefore, there is nothing paradoxical or politically incorrect in the assertion of the integrating role of Kazakh culture. We have to speak about it directly and unambiguously. Another factor to be taken into account is that the contents of modern Kazakh culture are not derived only from the traditional folkloric form of artistic creation of centuries past. They are a complex and multi-layered amalgamation, allowing us to master on a spiritual level the difficult realities of the twenty-first century.

Finally, when we speak of the interdependence and interaction of the national cultures of Kazakhstan, we are not referring to empty slogans but to truly inclusive processes, hidden forms flowing in the depths of the world of values, not always visible, but always carrying a powerful influence on every aspect of life. As far as the multi-ethnicity of Kazakhstan is concerned there are several intersecting "cultural layers", of global and regional religious complexes. These are primarily Islam and Orthodox Christianity, but there are also elements of practically all world faiths. Our basic ethnicities are Kazakh and Russian; our meta-ethnicities are Turkic and Slavic.

In this situation it is of prime importance to establish points of contact on the basis of common cultural values. The basis of such a unity in the modern state of development could become, and is in fact already becoming, the identification of members of every nationality within the Republic of Kazakhstan with the united political and civic whole.

Gradually we come to recognise the fact that Kazakhs not only occupy a single political and economic space, but also one cultural space. We are not only “post-Soviet people” but also the founders of a qualitatively new common culture. In order for the national elite to reach an understanding of these conditions, there must be a conscious and integrated effort to build the cultural activity of every national group into the common Kazakh cultural system; otherwise we shall not achieve the desired result. Such action is absolutely imperative for the national movement of modernisation.

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Can we regard the territory of Kazakhstan as a relatively united cultural space? This is no idle question, especially in the light of the recent collapse of cultural values which dissolved the myths of the recent past overnight. But nevertheless in my view we must respond firmly to the question. There are several factors to be examined.

First, the conditions for the birth of the Kazakh ethnic group had their historical roots in the centuries-old interaction of Turkic and Slavic cultures. This interaction continued within the framework of the Russian empire and the USSR. Of course, the idyllic pictures created by Soviet historiography bore little relation to reality and this interaction was at times of a bloody nature. But history deals with realities, however unpleasant these may be. The reality is that regardless of their great cultural losses, the Kazakh people developed with the other national groups of Kazakhstan in the context of a single culture and civilisation. Today, the majority of the population of the country has similar cultural orientations, and in the meta-ethnic sense they are basically Turks and Slavs. A rectification of various states of affairs in the history of the interaction of these main ethnic groups of Eurasia must be

thought through, not only when considering the past but also when looking into the future. Kazakhstan is a land of intensive cultural interrelation with exceptionally intensive contacts between cultural streams.

Second, we recognise the provincialism and naïveté of the assertion of the first half of the 1990s that almost every republic of the former USSR plays a role in the transcontinental bridge between Europe and Asia. In soberly evaluating the attempt by countries that have only just emerged to play a role on the global plane we have to be more realistic.

What does the cultural transition of Kazakhstan consist of? It is first of all a transition between the old and the new, a transition from the values of state paternalism to those of personal responsibility.

It is a transition through all the pains and sufferings of post-totalitarian society. But this transition to a sphere of cultural values is something that all layers of society must undergo, in order to base themselves on new values and become more integrated on the cultural level. Another feature of the transition is that Kazakhstan finds itself at the junction of two large "archipelagos" – the Eurasian cultural space and the peoples of Central Asia who are developing on a new basis of traditional historical and cultural unity. We must not compare these with each other. My view as a Eurasian is in part laid out in other works and I shall try to summarise these a bit later, but, to jump ahead a little, I shall say that an acceptable evaluation of the concept is based on an understanding of the future that it contains within it.

For, on the one hand, no one is prepared to accept the cultural reading of the imperial idea, and, on the other, no one can deny the practical role of Eurasian construction in the past, present and future.

However, the principal contents of our cultural identification lie within neither the Turkic nor the Eurasian historical and cultural contexts. Instead, they are tied up with the destiny of

our common motherland of Kazakhstan and her unique historical and cultural landscape, which consists neither of Eastern nor Western cultural models. An understanding of this, which might seem at first glance to be trivial, is crucial for viewing the ethno-cultural prospects of the new millennium.

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The orientation of both individuals and nations to the world of culture can at times resemble each other to a remarkably similar degree. Just as events in the memory of the individual may take on tragic or romantic tones, so the memory of the people is coloured by the present and is also directed towards the future.

Can we reduce our national history to its presentation by our domestic *mankurts*, from the Djungarski invasion to the Goloshchekin¹¹ experiments? Can we mystify it in a way that is characteristic of historians of several Central Asian states who claim that the origins of world civilisation lie here and only here?

All this has already occurred more than once, reminding us of the joke that "Russia is the motherland of the elephant." We shall not repeat similar falsehoods and assert that the meaning of world history rests on that of Kazakhstan. Such a stretched interpretation has a place only in the dialectical exercises of very young children and will only elicit sarcasm from those outside our country.

There is no sense in mythologising history, only in understanding those events that took place on the thousands of square kilometres of our land and which were truly significant on a national and at times continental level. We need to extract from these neither the bitterness of defeat nor material for national euphoria, but a perspective for the future. The lessons of history are general ones, and the lessons of the history of culture make

¹¹ Goloshchekin was First Party Secretary, architect of collectivization between 1928 and 1933, during which c. 1.5 m Kazakhs died.

sense when they live in the soul of the people. The people preserve in their memory that which helps them to survive.

And this above all it is the world of culture, which in a mystical sense lives in our souls in the form of symbols from both the past five hundred years and the last decades of the twentieth century. That is why Kashgari, al-Farabi, Khan Tauke, Bukeikhanov, Bukhar Zhyrau and Abai are so important to us.

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The psychology of the twentieth century devoted much attention to so-called archetypes, those hard-to-define great ideas, images or systems of ideas that swim into our consciousness from the level of the unconscious. National folk tales, mythology, literature and music show that in the consciousness of every one of us there is a mysterious capacity to form images which lie at the foundation of our evaluation of history and culture and which distinguish "Us" from "Others." Without such archetypes it seems altogether quite impossible to speak of the national memory, the national view of the world. The most astonishing thing is that on the personal level something as insignificant as a flock of migrating birds or the sounds of a peaceful night over the *aul* carry more emotional weight than a thousand impassioned propagandistic speeches. As long as the Kazakhs derive joy from an image of the steppe at dawn, as long as the melodies of national folksong have power over their souls, the famous Kazakh archetypes will have a place in the archetypal mosaic of the world.

However, when the nation as a whole considers its cultural perspectives, these must not be reduced to the vaguely defined symbols of the collective unconscious. The here and now demands conscious work towards an integration of the past, including its "blocks and fragments". This is especially important today, when there is no more important task than that of uniting the people within the stream of history.



THE LEGACY OF ALASH
AND MODERNITY

A morsel of genuine history is a thing so rare as to be always valuable.

Thomas Jefferson

Let us consider the mechanism of ethnic and social conflict that befell the countries in the CIS. In all these post-Soviet societies besides geopolitical and historical factors, much depended on the behaviour of the intelligentsia. In many countries they were at the forefront of all these upheavals, actively involved in change and taking part in every conflict that flared up, aggressively inciting their "own side" to fight against "others". All this resulted in much bloodshed.

It is the intellectual elite who are to blame for the heaviest political clashes in the countries concerned, clashes which began as newspaper debates and ended with gunfire.

Throughout all these years the majority of the Kazakh intelligentsia demonstrated their wisdom and self-control, not allowing emotions to spill over into a call to arms. This came as a surprise to some gloomy pundits who had predicted serious bloody conflicts in the territory of Kazakhstan, but it is easily explained. The pessimists failed to take into account the historical and social responsibility of the Kazakh intelligentsia, which enabled them to pass this test of maturity inflicted on them by fate at the end of the century. This was a reflection of the common Kazakh cultural values of consideration, patience and openness to dialogue.

At the same time the modern Kazakh intelligentsia has a deep love of tradition, reaching back to the depths of antiquity. The great importance of the intellectual circles of the Kazakh steppe is not coincidental; neither is the fact that, for example, Tole Bi, Kazybek Bi and Aiteke Bi take no lesser places in the popular memory than those of the great khans.

A close examination of history shows that by the first third of the twentieth century a number of gifted figures had emerged from the Kazakh intelligentsia. At times invisible to the outsider or to a casual glance, the influence of these intellectuals and their lessons in citizenship merit the appreciation of their successors, the modern Kazakh intelligentsia.

At the beginning of the twentieth century the Kazakh spiritual and intellectual elite promoted the idea of national consolidation. The representatives of this elite came from different levels of society, primarily from the traditional steppe aristocracy. At the beginning of the twentieth century the Kazakh intelligentsia adopted the practice of passing on the baton from one generation to the next. The intellectual professions began to take on a hereditary character.

The leaders of the national liberation movement were: Alikhan Bukeikhanov (scientist-economist, member of the Constitutional Democratic party of Russia, deputy in the first and second Dumas), Akhmet Baitursynov (poet, translator, linguist, editor of the newspaper *The Kazakh*), Myrzhakyp Dulatov, Zhakyp Akpaev, Mustafa Chokai, Mukhamedzhan Tynyshpaev, Bakhytzhan Karataev, Khalel and Dzhansha Dosmukhamedov and others. The majority were graduates from institutes of higher education in St Petersburg, Moscow, Warsaw, Kazan, Omsk and Orenburg. Alimkhan Yeremekov was a notable state figure, professor of mathematics and participant in the Alash movement. According to him, Alikhan Bukeikhanov graduated with Lenin as an external student from the law faculty of St Petersburg. Bukeikhanov was fluent in several foreign languages and by the age of 24 held two diplomas from the capital (the first from the Forestry Institute). Bukeikhanov was renowned as a brilliant and cultured young man, one of the leading exponents of Marxist theory in Saint Petersburg. (Sultan Khan Akkul-uly, *Tragedy of the Alash-Orda*. Law Gazette Nos. 33-36, 1995).

One of the main tasks of this intelligentsia was not only the preservation of the national existence of the Kazakh people but the reconstruction of the historical past and the cultivation of national feeling.

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Admittedly there was a wide gulf between the educated elite and the traditional leadership. Analogies could be found in all colonial dependencies on the planet. For example, in 1941 Marjorie Perham, the famous author of works on the system of indirect colonial rule in Africa, wrote, "Among the Africans there is at present a current of ideas which holds that native administration is an old-fashioned and regressive principle, not corresponding to the spirit of democracy or to the times. The majority of educated Africans, especially in West Africa and the Sudan, criticise and even strongly oppose indirect government. They say that it gives power to the uneducated leaders and the elders. Instead of replacing these with educated leaders, they reinforce tribalist feelings and hence retain the lack of unity in the country. This, they say, stems from the old politics of 'divide and rule', which enables the empire to keep their subjects weak and impede their movement towards self-government." (Katagoshchina, IT, *The Intelligentsia of Nigeria*, M., 1977, p.71).

The new generation of Kazakh intelligentsia tried to surmount clan and tribal prejudices and give voice to common national interests. In order to create national unity at a time when colonial politics were gaining strength they believed it necessary to overcome the clan division of Kazakh society.

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The Russian revolutions of 1905 to 1907 played their part in the growth of a national movement on the Kazakh steppe. On 25 July 1905 the leaders of Alash convened a Kazakh conference at Koyandinskii bazaar near the town of Karakal. The conference drew up a petition to be presented to the Chair of the Soviet of Ministers of Russia. It demanded a cessation of the resettlement

of peasants; the organisation of a separate Kazakh administration in matters of faith; the lifting of censorship; official business to be carried out in the Kazakh language; the introduction of sitting courts; the involvement of Kazakh delegates in development meetings of projects to be discussed in the State Duma. In May 1905 the district head of the Akmolskoi province told the military governor that, "Social and political movements in Russia have even reached the Akmolinskii district, particularly involving the Muslim section of the population. The old, buried wishes and dreams of these people have begun to take more concrete forms." (Atishev A.A., *Political thought of Kazakhstan in the second half of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century*. Almaty, 1979, p. 133).

This awakening of national self-consciousness formed the basis for the consolidation of the Turkic peoples. Between 1905 and 1907 three congresses of Muslims in Russia were held, resulting in the formation of the "Islamic Union", which included Shakhmardan Kozhagulov as a member of its presidium.

From 1905 there was an Islamic parliamentary fraction in the State Duma. Articles by Kazakh authors appeared in the pages of Islamic publications as well as in the Russian opposition press

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In December 1905 in Uralsk the first all-Kazakh congress announced its aim of founding a national political party along the lines of the Cadet party. The leaders tried to direct this national movement towards the campaign for a constitutional monarchy and liberal reform. They sharply criticised the politics of the Russian government, especially on the agrarian question. Despite the arrest of Bukeikhanov, a second all-Kazakh congress was held in Orenburg in February 1906, which was attended by 150 delegates. The congress approved the programme of the Russian

Cadets and demanded the return of all confiscated land to the Kazakhs, an end to the resettlement of peasants, the adoption of a law on the opening of schools, madrassas and universities. As the leadership of the Cadet party did not support these demands, the Kazakh opposition turned their attention to the State Duma, the first Russian parliament.

Bukeikhanov, Kozhagulov and Karataev were elected as members of the first and second Dumas. They spoke on the new agrarian reforms and reviewed the politics of resettlement. During the sitting of the second Duma on 16 May 1907 Karataev made a speech on the destructive effect of the resettlement policy on the agricultural life of the Kazakhs. He said: "The burning agrarian question of our state is that the government wants to allow the resettlement of peasants on the territory of the steppe regions, namely, on the territory of the Uralsk, Turgaisk, Akmolinsk and Semipalatinsk regions ... As a result of this seizure of lands the government has created a real threat that the Kirghiz will be destroyed." When the speaker interrupted him, Karataev declared that Kazakhs supported any Russian opposition movement that engaged in the confiscation of private lands for the relief of hunger. In a meeting with the head of the government department for agriculture and land use Karataev requested the temporary cessation of peasant resettlement. He was told categorically that resettlement would continue, as Kazakhstan had a lot of land that had been under-cultivated by the nomads. "In the twentieth century we need to end the nomad way of life of the Kyrgyz. Consequently resettlement is a matter of urgency."

Furthermore, the new suffrage law of 3 June 1907 deprived the nomad peoples of their voting rights. New repression against the leaders of the Kazakh national movement began: in 1908 Bukeikhanov was arrested for the second time, followed by Baitursynov in July 1909.

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In January 1911 in Troitsk, Seralinym and Alimovym launched a monthly journal, *Aikap*, sharply criticising tsarism and the Russian presence on the steppe. In 1911 the newspaper *Kazakhstan* was launched in the Uralsk region. Its editors were Eleusyn Buirin, Batyrsha Kairniyazov and Gumar Karashev. After the fourth edition the newspaper was banned by the Russian authorities and did not appear again until 1913.

A huge influence on the awakening of the self-consciousness of the Kazakh people was M Dulatov's book of poetry, *Oyan, Kazakh!* ("Awaken, Kazakhs!"), published in 1909 in Ufa.

From 1913 a new stage began in the liberation movement in Kazakhstan, linked to the newspaper *The Kazakh*, printed in Orenburg. From the start it had a circulation of 3,000, which was large for the times.

The editor Baitursynov was surrounded by a constellation of talented Kazakh journalists and writers: Bukeikhanov, Dulatov, Zhumabaev, Aimautov, Dosmukhamedov and others. *The Kazakh* was an opposition paper and made no small contribution to the awakening of a national consciousness in the Kazakh people. It addressed the concrete problems of the time, propagandised enlightened ideas and became the printed organ of the future Alash party. The anti-colonial character of the publication attracted the displeasure of the authorities. Between 1913 and 1916 the newspaper was shut down 26 times, and Baitursynov was arrested more than once. (*Kazakhstan at the beginning of the 20th century*, Almaty, 1994, p. 18).

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The great loss of Russian life during the war from 1914 to 1916 exacerbated the problem of human resources. In these cir-

cumstances the government launched several measures to bridge the deficit. One of these was to draw "non-national peoples" of Central Asia and Siberia into defence work. In September 1915, Chaev, the head of military construction for the Russian army, apprised Tynyshpaev of the intention to draft Kazakhs into military service. In February 1916, the Kazakh delegation headed by Bukeikhanov visited a number of government departments and had a meeting with the minister General Polivanov. The general declared that the question of drafting "the Kirghiz is postponed." In successive issues of *The Kazakh*, the leaders of Alash discussed the problem of drafting Kazakhs into military service. The majority thought that the Kazakhs could form cavalry detachments similar to those of the Cossacks. In April 1916, during the annual fair at Karkaralinsk, an emergency meeting of the congress was planned to discuss the issues connected to the Kazakh draft. However the meeting was abandoned following the decree of Nicholas II on 25 June 1916 ("On the drafting of the non-Russian male population into military service and any other activity required for the defence of the realm" Section 1. No. 182, 6 June 1916, p.1747).

Having announced the mobilisation of "non-Russians" for defence work, the government decided to use them as cheap labour in order to release Russian workers and peasants as army reinforcements. However, the state was apprehensive about giving arms and military training to the Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Turkmen, Kyrgyz and other peoples who in the future might use these against Russia.

Undoubtedly, this step depended to a large degree on the national leaders. In that dramatic period the members of Alash decided to protect the people from fresh cataclysm. Hence they told the Kazakhs to obey the Tsar's order. First, they believed that Russia was faced by an external threat which fully affected Kazakhs as her subjects. On 11 July 1916 in an address "To the

citizens of Alash”, Bukeikhanov, Baitursynov and Dulatov wrote: “Our fellow citizens of the Fatherland, the Russian people, our fellow-Muslim Tatar people, and other neighbouring peoples burn in a conflagration. As subjects we cannot stand to one side ... To refuse the government’s order and sit at home taking care of our own business, not joining in the defence of the state, would only help the enemy.” (*The Kazakh* 16 July 1916). Second, they did not want to send practically unarmed Kazakhs to resist the regular Russian army. Third, in the event of a Russian victory the Kazakhs hoped that their situation would improve and that they would be granted national autonomy.

This tactic of a reasoned compromise with the Russian empire was motivated above all by the desire to protect the people. The leaders of Alash proposed to postpone the implementation of the draft until they had undertaken the appropriate preparation.

Disquieted by the opposition to their order, the government had to make a tactical retreat. Mobilisation in Kazakhstan and Central Asia was postponed until the middle of September. This was portrayed as an example of “generosity” on the part of the Tsar towards his subjects. The reality was different. The uncoordinated local uprisings of Kazakhs coalesced into a national war against Russian colonialism. This pattern was repeated in other regions of Central Asia. The uprisings spread to Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. (Turunov, KT, *Central Asia and Kazakhstan in 1916*, M., 1961, p. 399).

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At the end of July and beginning of August 1916 Kazakhstan became an arena of cruel conflict.

The most organised and prolonged was the movement in Turgaiskii district, led by Amangeldy Uderbaiuly Imanov, the grandson of Batyr Iman (an associate of Kenesar).

The Kazakhs paid a high price for their attempt to win freedom. For example, between the beginning of the world war and 1 January 1917 the population of Dzharkentskii district fell by 27%, Leninsk by 53%, Vernii by 55% and so on. The total population losses including those who fled to China came to about one million. According to statistics of 1897 Kazakhstan had 3,399,000 inhabitants (*History of the Kazakh SSR from antiquity to the present day*, Almaty, 1979, vol. 3).

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The scale and cruelty of the repression were so enormous that eyewitness accounts became public knowledge throughout the country. The leaders of the Kazakh intelligentsia played no small part in this, bringing the truth to the democratic sections of Russian society. The future Prime Minister AF Kerensky, in his capacity as leader of the Trudovik party in the State Duma went to Turkestan in September 1916 in order to acquaint himself with the situation. On the eve of the opening of the fourth State Duma Bukeikhanov went to Petrograd in order to present documents he had collected on the brutality of reprisals and to request that the deputies launch an inquiry. Issue 209 of *The Kazakh* published a notice of his presentation of this request to the Duma of 19 November 1916.

At the beginning of December 1916 the president of the State Duma MV Rodzyanko was presented with three inquiries concerning the decree of Nicholas II on the "Requisitions from foreign people". They were signed by more than ninety deputies in the names of the factions of the Trudoviks, Mensheviks, Progressives, Cadets and Muslims.

Among the signatories were the noted politicians of the time: AF Kerensky, NS Chkheidze, AI Konovalov, G Dzhaifarov and others. It was noted that, "many thousands of indigenous peoples

were killed by the punitive forces without respect for age or sex ... we must not shrink from revealing the brutal means of pacification and terrorisation – the mass destruction of the population by punitive expeditions, the burning of towns and villages (*kishlaks* and *auls*) as well as individual houses of ‘the guilty’, and, finally, the confiscation of property from the entire population of towns, districts and villages, in contravention of article 71 of the Basic Laws of the Russian Empire. All these methods were carried out on a mass scale in Semirechie, where the Kyrgyz population was destroyed by the thousand.”

However, the conservative majority in the Duma prevented open debate on this question. Therefore, Rodzyanko proposed to combine the three inquiries into one and present it to Kerensky, on his return from Turkestan. In his presentation to a closed sitting on 13 December 1916, Kerensky directed the attention of the deputies to the incessant war requisition of horses, nomad tents, camels, etc. from the local population. With his characteristic pathos Kerensky announced, “It is they [the government decrees] that are guilty of destroying this flowering region. The conditions are so terrible that the local population have begun to starve.”

In his oration Kerensky sharply criticised the actions of the punitive detachments. Recalling his trips to the front, he emphasised that in Turkestan he had at times been horrified by the burned-out, deserted *auls* and *kishlaks* and the people killed for no reason. Kerensky categorically denied rumours that the insurgents were buying arms on a mass scale. “In all the expanses of Turkestan and the steppe regions,” he said, – “no native stockpiles of weapons have been discovered. All the people had at their disposal were a few flintlocks and some metal scythes, poles, batons etc.”

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One must give the Russian democratic politicians their due. In the hardest and most tragic times in the lives of the peoples of Kazakhstan and Central Asia, tsarism inflicted a true genocide against the people, while the tribune of the State Duma came to their defence.

In 1916 the Kazakh national liberation movement was one element of the nationwide crisis that gripped Russia. It was a movement on a mass scale, drawn from all levels of society, united under nationalist slogans. Bodies of state power were founded within the colonies of tsarist Russia. This was a revolution of national liberation; one of the first revolutions of its kind.

The overthrow of the monarchy as a result of the February revolution completely changed the political situation in Kazakhstan. The Kazakh people welcomed the event and actively participated in political life. One of the innumerable revolutionary meetings of the spring of 1917 passed the following motion: "The powerful wave of the Russian people rolled over our wide steppe rather too late. But all the same, it is with great joy that we Kyrgyz of the Utemishskii and Karabakirskii districts recognise that the Russian people are fighting for themselves and for all peoples of Russia, for happiness and blessed freedom. We do not want the district governors here and request that they remove themselves."

The leaders of the national intelligentsia greeted the news of the revolution with joy. Bukeikhanov, the leader of the minority nationalities section of the Union of Land and Towns, telegraphed from Minsk: "To the people of Russia. The sun of Brotherhood, Equality and Freedom has risen. Kazakhs must unite in order to support the new government. To strengthen the new order we must reinforce brotherly ties with other peoples. We

must prepare for the elections to the Provisional Assembly, and fight for unity and justice." (*The Kazakh*, 24 March 1917).

The Provisional government of the new Russia took concrete measures to abolish the legacies of imperial national politics.

On 20 March 1917 it removed all limitations on the rights of Russian citizens of different religion and nationality. On 7 April 1917 an announcement was made on the formation of a Turkestan committee composed of Shchepkin, Bukeikhanov, Tynyshpaev, Maksutov, Elpatevskii, Lipovskii, Shkapskii, Preobrazhenskii and Davletshin. (The Turkestan committee was the organ designated by the Provisional government for the government of the territory of the former Turkestan general governorship). Besides this, leaders of the Alash-Orda were appointed by the Provisional government to the posts of the Turgaiskii district commissar (Bukeikhanov), Zhetysuiskii district commissar (Tynyshpaev) and other positions of responsibility. For the first time, members of the Kazakh intellectual elite entered the organs of government of Kazakhstan. Their political views were affiliated to the SRO¹²-Cadet block. These men took leading positions in the Alash movement as it engaged in the political life of the region.

On 7 March 1917 the Provisional government amnestied the participants of the uprising of 1916. At the same time, they took a decision that from April 1917 Kazakhs would be demobilised from defence work. This strengthened Kazakh support for the Provisional government.

In autumn 1917 the decision was passed to donate financial support of the sum of 11,150,000 Russian roubles to the Russian and Kazakh population of the Semirechie region who had suffered as a result of the events of 1916. From this sum 5 million roubles were given directly to the native population, of which 100 roubles went to each homestead.

¹² Socialist Revolutionary Party.

The overthrow of the tsarist regime and the democratisation of the social and political life in the country facilitated the formation of Alash as an organisation. The Alash party was founded in June 1917 at an all-Kazakh congress in Orenburg. They set to work on a party programme which consisted of ten sections. The basic aim of the party was the recognition of Kazakh autonomy as a member of the Russian Federation of Democratic Republics. (Alash-Orda. Coll. Documents, Kzyl-Orda, 1929, p.19).

The significance of the foundation of a national political organisation is undervalued as a part of the history of our fatherland. The achievements of the leaders of Alash have repercussions even up to this day. It was not a nationalist but a patriotic organisation, which had as its goal the gradual transformation of Kazakh society and its adaptation to contemporary reality. It passed liberal measures directed towards modernisation, while taking into account the level of development of society, its traditions and way of life. The conditions of that time did not allow for the foundation of a sovereign independent Kazakhstan; consequently their programme was in favour of a federated, democratic Russia of autonomous and independent governments. "The head of government is the Constituent Assembly. Its president is elected by the Constituent Assembly and the State Duma for a set term. The President governs through the Soviet of Ministers, responsible before the Constituent Assembly and the State Duma." This democratic beginning was reinforced by the recognition of the right of all citizens to vote regardless of origin, creed or sex. The programme reaffirmed the secular basis of government. "Religion must be separate from government; all must be free and equal." Islam had entered Kazakhstan from outside, with the orthodox religious centres of the Volga region and Central Asia playing an active role in its dissemination. Tak-

ing this into account, the Alash leaders decided to establish a separate spiritual government in Kazakhstan: "The Kirghiz have their own mufti." Force of tradition made it necessary to allow the mullahs to continue to register civil affairs (births, marriages and deaths). In article 5, concerning legal procedures, there is an interesting question on the language. In the distant year of 1917 Kazakh democracy issued an order that: "In places where populations are mixed, legal investigations and trials must take place in the language of the majority of the population of a given area. All peoples are equal before the law." The social directive of the programme declared that: "Payment of taxes must be based on levels of wealth and property-holding – the rich pay more, the poor- less," and that "labour laws must benefit the workers." The programme of free education was strengthened and education in primary school took place in the native language. Members of Alash-Orda requested that Kazakhs "have their own middle and higher educational institutions, including a university."

The preceding years had seen mass seizures of land from the Kazakh population. Consequently, the programme proposed a just resolution to the issue, which principally consisted of the return of land to the native population.

The implementation of the Alash party programme brought about reconciliation between the opposing paths of tradition and innovation within Kazakh society. It contained transitional measures that facilitated a stable path towards modernisation. The experience of the modernisation of Eastern countries showed that capitalism flourished best in the places where it was able to exploit traditional mechanisms, as, for example, in Japan and Korea. Attentive reading of the programme shows that its authors had the interests of the people as a whole at heart.

The national programme brought together all nationalities living in the region at the time. In a word, it promoted a democratic alternative for the development of the country, so that this

was not realised through the growth of authoritarianism. (*Revolution and the National Question*, TZ, M., 1930).

The Kazakh people were given the real possibility of achieving their main goal – the reconstruction of the national state. However, the peaceful development of events was interrupted by a new crisis in Russian society which led to the establishment of Bolshevik dictatorship.

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The fate of the great Kazakh statesmen took a tragic turn. But the lessons of national bravery and intellectual wisdom have not been forgotten.

We may say that in the first half of the century the achievements of the Kazakh intelligentsia, who suffered such terrible personal tragedies, were modern not only in their unique conceptual sense, but also at the civic and moral level. In the final decade of the nineteenth century, the Kazakh intelligentsia was more advanced than the masses and rejected the model of aggressive populism. This was perhaps one of the most important factors contributing to the stability of Kazakhstan.

The renowned Georgian philosopher Merab Mamardashvili said at the beginning of the 1990s that if his people were not in the right then he would not stand by them in their error. The Kazakh intelligentsia did not have to ask this question of themselves because they embodied the moral and political choice of the people, who, largely thanks to them, were able to enjoy a peaceful path of state development, without political battles and bloody turmoil. In their turn, future generations must correctly evaluate the contribution of the Kazakh intelligentsia to national independence during the most difficult stage of our most recent history. Although not always obvious, this contribution was entirely positive.

The creative intelligentsia, who are at the forefront of this process, know from within and better than anyone else that it is not a question of working from rational principles but from the legacy of our ineffable historical and cultural attributes, which are unique to us and which distinguish us from other peoples. Therefore, it would be too easy to accuse this intelligentsia of a retrograde desire to revive traditional society or to modernise no-mad archaisms.

* * *

The problem is considerably deeper and more complex than superficial minds can conceive. The intelligentsia's concern over our cultural and historical identity is absolutely justified. For the question is this, if we unquestioningly and uncritically respond to the challenges of this period of history, then the Kazakhs as a cultural whole must disappear, their place taken by technocrats, people who are educated to meet only the technical, formal and legalistic demands of modern life.

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Certainly the Kazakh population has no doubts about the urgency of economic modernisation and that its effectiveness will be increased by the widespread adoption of advanced technical experience. But here we are concerned with the social cost of modernisation and with its cultural components.

If we reject the need to preserve and develop our cultural and historical identity then we deprive ourselves of our own attributes.

The Kazakh creative intelligentsia is vitally aware of the need to preserve the specific cultural qualities of the Kazakh people. They delve deep into these qualities, trying to uncover new

meanings, emotional and creative strata. At the deepest level, they sense the culture's rhythms, its unique inner colouring and flavours. Through their artistic work they strive to create a unique national expression of the Kazakh world-view.

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Agitation, anxiety, gloom and despair on the one hand; romantic passion and hope on the other. These are some of the feelings that overwhelm the troubled hearts of the creative intelligentsia today. Rather than trying to find rational answers to the problems that arise before them, they direct understanding and empathy towards the soul of the Kazakh people.

Beyond the loud external noises and pressures of modern history it is only the intelligentsia who can hear the soul's unhurried, subtle engagement with its challenges. It is only they who perceive the changes in internal codes and matrices which occur in the secret depths of the Kazakh soul. The intellectual elite are the guardians of the soul's creative instinct, her genius. In short, they appreciate and understand the culture of the Kazakh people as a unique artistic creation.

* * *

Besides political and economic factors there are others of a historical and cultural nature. Without an established tradition of scientific and creative elite, without appropriate institutions, without a developed conceptual, theoretical and methodological structure for our past and current history, it is an enormous task to overcome stereotypes and myths of the moribund nature of nomadic society. This is true even at the level of academic science.

This applies not only to Kazakh history but also to that of all Turkic peoples. Without a satisfactory factual basis, not to mention a preparatory understanding, we lack an adequate conceptual canvas on which to work.

But attempts have been made. To a large degree, these were linked to the personalities of the intelligentsia who were creative in both the artistic and scientific fields. Together they represented the crystallisation of thought of our recent Kazakh history. They are pivotal figures in the stream of time and history. It is hard to overestimate their significance for our culture. Their names are legion: Chokan Valikhanov and Abai, Auezov and Satpaev, Margulan and Bukeikhanov...

Now that Kazakhstan is open to the world many of its people are establishing direct contacts with Western countries in every sphere of life. And westerners themselves work successfully within our country. All this undoubtedly affects the development of the Kazakh nation, its mastery of invaluable Western experience in the techno-genetic and humanistic-institutional fields in response to contemporary historical challenges.

The profound significance of this situation must be understood. The modernising principle cannot exist without the basis of Western technology, the mastery of its institutional experience in different social spheres.

It would be absurd to reject this position simply because it was imposed by external imperatives. No. In substance it reflects the sum of the challenges of time and history. It is indispensable not only at the level of consciousness and psychology but also on a practical level and for an ever-growing part of the modern Kazakh nation. Our driving group is capable of mastering and putting into practice a Western style of technical, institutional and humanistic reform and in doing so will prove its rationality and applicability to the world.



ON NATIONAL
IDENTITY

*Time is motionless
Like a riverbank;
It seems to fly by,
In fact it is we who move past.*

P. Bouast

This world has not created too many means of national identification.

One of these is religious identification. In its time the Jewish nation followed this path, although of course the number of “internal identifiers,” has significantly increased, especially with the foundation of the state of Israel. At the beginning of this stage of identification the primary means of self-definition came through the adoption of a unified religious system.

Religion became predominant in the people’s value system. To cite other examples, it was also a means of self-identification for the Arab meta-ethnic group and, in part, for the Poles, although many other elements were involved.

Of course, in modern circumstances this means of national identification has become complicated for many reasons.

It may be said to function as one of the supplementary means of identity formation on the basis of inclusion into a large meta-ethnic community of the civilisational type.

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For Kazakhs, the role of Islam is significant, and an awareness of this is becoming an important characteristic of our national consciousness, especially after long years of misrepresentation of the function and meaning of this great and humanistic religion. At the same time, it is evident that religion is not the predominant means of national identification today. The reasons for this are many; some are found in our history.

They lie above all in the nomadic and post-nomadic periods of our history within the Russian empire when Orthodox Christianity was imposed as the state religion and in the period of Soviet history when atheism was a vital component of state ideology.

Meanwhile, the actual role of religious consciousness in history is enormous. We recall that for around two thousand years

Europe followed the difficult and dramatic path of acquainting the illiterate European masses with great spiritual values. The Reformation accustomed European individuals to answering their "metaphysical questions" themselves, to some extent even by-passing intermediaries. In other words, there was a reformation of the fundamental spheres of people's spiritual lives, changing their relationship to themselves, the state and society. To a large extent this enabled a new mentality to come into being.

Now Islam, the most widespread religion of the modern world, is going through a complex process of reformation while preserving its fundamental principles. The colossal effect of this process on the national development of countries where Islam has deep historical roots should never be underestimated.

How can millions of people, living with the pressures of daily life, find sufficient spiritual sustenance in their metaphysical existences to enable them to see themselves not as passive elements, but as spiritual individuals with their own history and, most importantly, to take personal responsibility for the creation of a national spiritual perspective? The answers to these questions lie largely in the religious sphere. Freedom of conscience, outlined in our constitution as one of our priorities, is not a dead juridical principle but an acknowledgement of the vital importance of the institution of religion in society.

* * *

We must not forget that we have always been included in the most powerful world religious traditions. And this is a source of our modern identification, although I repeat that it is not the most important one. The twentieth century is, above all, an age of paradox, and one of these is that in the modern world the nation, if it does not include religion as a supplementary component of spiritual modernisation, is liable to become a victim

of external state systems, consciously or unconsciously adopting religious values from models that have been formed for others.

Of course the democratic state is not justified in forcibly dining one religious dogma or another into the heads of its citizens. This is the principal position of the modern leadership of Kazakhstan. We remember our historical traditions. For the Turks were always tolerant towards the religions of their subject peoples. Even during their three hundred years of Russian citizenship the nomadic peoples distinguished themselves by their tolerance.

In a word, our ancestors and the Turkic family of peoples never demonstrated religious aggression and respected the spiritual freedom of other peoples. This is a lesson of history which serves to counter ill-considered judgements on "the reactionary role of Islam in Central Asia."

We must be prepared for the growth of religious feeling in the mass consciousness. There is no threat in this. For in itself religion is nothing but clear moral truths, and not instructions. All that can threaten us is an insufficient degree of personal faith and this of course is not the concern of the state. But we all live in one country and it is very important that the light of true faith does not become distorted by ignorant representatives of the religions themselves. Religious fanaticism, as a rule, does not emanate from a surplus of faith but from an inauthentic religious culture.

In Kazakhstan we have established a healthy tradition of mutual respect and understanding between representatives of the faiths, and this is a great blessing.

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However, let us return to the question of the means of national identification. Having remarked upon the large role played by religion, we must not ignore other means of identification.

One of these is identification on the basis of race. There are several ideologies such as that of "negritude" which have tried to establish a racial conception in many countries of Africa. Sometimes these approaches have been involved in more volatile situations. But we must concentrate our attention on this issue insofar as it affects Kazakhstan. For our territory has undergone the processes of both "Mongolisation" and "Indo-Europeanisation". We must not forget that over the course of centuries the territory of Kazakhstan has seen a process of race mixing on the basis of marriage between members of different national groups. Therefore, to base the national identity of Kazakhstan on racial criteria is, at the very least, inappropriate.

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What then would be an appropriate model for national identification? This, perhaps, is the most complex issue of the political and cultural life of modern Kazakhstan. And, as with many complex questions, it has no simple answer. But the politician is obliged to respond.

The question of identity is the alpha and omega of national politics. The multinational and multi-faith nature of our country, its particularities of history and geography, all dictate the need for a two-level approach to its solution.

At the first level we must consider the unification of the people of Kazakhstan as a civic and political whole. Here we are referring to the population themselves and not a meta-ethnic entirety. It is important to understand the difference between the principal approaches. The latter is directed to the formation of a single ethnic community and the former towards a civil community. Therefore, a judgement about the country as a "Kazakh" nation is somewhat premature. There are many reasons for this. At this stage there is something more important. The state has to

move beyond a formal unification of its citizens to one based on solidarity and common values. The national state idea is distinguished from totalitarian state ideology in that it is not imposed from above but emanates from actual developments within society. And this national state idea is formed around the most important political value – a united territorial whole and an independent Kazakhstan, motherland for all Kazakhs, whatever their national identity. Unity, integrity and an independent Kazakhstan – these are values which have no implications of competition or conflict for the members of any ethnic group. As a rule, history judges human actions in hindsight. After several decades the significance of these clear and simple principles will become more apparent.

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Why is it early to speak of the formation of a united Kazakh nation today? And why do I prefer to speak of civil and political unity and not ethnic? First, the multi-ethnic character of modern Kazakhstan does not allow us to speak of the formation of a united ethnic identity in the near future. We have to be realists and understand that today our primary focus of unification is around common political values. Although such a culturally integrative factor as the Kazakh language must of course play a very substantial role. Any attempt to force Kazakhs into a united ethnic consciousness may result in serious conflict.

Second, the recent experience of the USSR demonstrated the historical failure of an assimilative model that attempts to reduce everything to a single language, ideology and culture. As soon as totalitarian power fell, this entire great propaganda machine under the aegis of a new meta-ethnos collapsed like a castle in the sand. It is better to study the lessons of history than repeat the same mistakes. Of course, the assimilative mechanism also oper-

ates in the democratic government model but it proceeds from a natural evolutionary model and not the path of coercion.

Third, the Kazakh nation itself must select the path of independent development, forge its own national consolidation and give birth to a united ethnic consciousness. We must strengthen and nurture the unity of our own ethnic Kazakh consciousness. This is an entirely natural position.

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We may recall extraordinary examples of the development of ethnic consciousness both ancient and modern. For example, there is the astonishing endurance of the Jewish and Armenian national identity. Thousands of years of exile and ostracism, pogroms and concentration camps could not break the strong sense of ethnicity, be it that of a child in Kishinev or a businessman in New York, a feeling of belonging to the great Jewish people. The Armenians of France, the USA, Russia and Lebanon preserve their powerful mechanism of national identification regardless of their vicissitudes of fate and their dispersal throughout the world.

I am always struck with astonishment and admiration for the Tatar people. Spread out over huge expanses, they have been able to preserve their national identity in the most difficult circumstances. And look at the Germans of Kazakhstan. Even the German inhabitants of villages around Karaganda and Kustanai always preserved their particular German spirit. The Volga Germans retained their culture and language regardless of their tortuous fate. The very greatest sons of Russia, who cannot be accused of any form of nationalism, cherished their "Russianness" with love and pride. The sense of national identity is no barrier to respect for other cultures and ethnic consciousnesses. I fully understand the modern creations of Russian culture which openly and proudly proclaim the greatness of the Russian spirit. It is ob-

vious that each people creates its “sacred spiritual field” and is proud of it.

The development of the Kazakh national self-consciousness, a feeling of belonging to a rich and splendid historic and cultural whole, and to be able to call oneself by the name “Kazakh”, – these are the main priorities for the ethnos. To dissemble here or invent diplomatic reservations here is unnecessary; it is an entirely normal phenomenon.

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To summarise, we can say that our first basic level of identification is civic and political unity. We Kazakhs share common political values. And the task consists of ensuring that these values predominate in the civic consciousness of the people of Kazakhstan.

In the democratic state all national groups have the right to legal protection and we ensure this in our actual practice. We shall not become one Kazakh nation in the near future. This is impossible for reasons of ethnic, religious or cultural differences. Impossible, in so far as democratic Kazakhstan rejects methods of forced assimilation, such as the tragic example of recent Soviet history. The Kazakh nation is today addressing the task of developing a powerful ethnic self-awareness which is capable of consolidating the nation. Therefore, the essence of the first level of identity is the identification of citizens with the political destiny of the state of Kazakhstan, which defends the interests of all its citizens equally. This is the basis of our unity and stability.

The second level of national identity is connected to that of Kazakhs themselves, and it is linked to the problem of Kazakh national self-awareness and self-direction within a spiritual context. This is the subject of a large and open discussion which deserves further examination.

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In conditions of free and unhindered development, national self-awareness releases huge reserves of emotional and spiritual energy and feelings in relation to the national community. Without this, patriotism will merely be state-ordained. With independence, the Kazakh people acquired such a potential means of recognising their "Kazakhood".

The formation of national self-awareness took place intermittently, interrupted by powerful external influences and sometimes "freezing" for decades. In addition, the united ethno-evolutionary line was broken more than once. The practical institutional safeguarding of the Kazakh language and culture did not reach even the minimum level, and this drained all the vital organs necessary for a full ethno-cultural existence.

All this is our actual history. A sober understanding of these circumstances is vital for a "diagnosis" of the modern state of Kazakh self-awareness.

It is no exaggeration to say that the many interruptions are linked to long periods of inertia. These reflected the influence not only of the past decades but also of whole centuries.

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What do we mean when we speak of the intermittence of the process of acquiring an all-Kazakh national self-awareness? There are fully-known facts. By the Middle Ages the nation had already developed bodies of centralised statehood, but over the course of centuries it lost the opportunity to build its own independent state. Did this affect the national consciousness? Without a doubt.

What do we have in mind by the interruption of the natural ethnic evolution? Such a fully-known fact as the forced contrac-

tion of the bases of nomadic production and the ensuing forced settlement. The destruction of the traditional pastoral way of life resulted not from a natural evolutionary change in the ethnic group itself but from the imposition of an entirely different culture and productive system. This led not only to the deformation of the social structure but also to trauma within the national consciousness.

It is extremely important for the national consciousness to rest upon a system of social bodies which will protect and develop the ethnic language and culture. This especially relates to the educational system and the distribution of mass information. We have seen the educational system rebuilt on the principle of the "redundancy of the Kazakh language", when it was impossible to study for the more competitive professions in the Kazakh language. As a result there was a loss of motivation in acquiring a full command of the language, especially among elite groups of the nation. This directly affected the national consciousness. The rationale for this was simple – a minimisation of institutional protection of the national identity. And today when the state of Kazakhstan restores what was minimised in the past, this must be correctly understood as a restoration of normal affairs.

* * *

What has principally changed in the years of independence and what has become the basis of assessing the development of national identity?

First, at the end of the twentieth century Kazakhs have again achieved a numerical majority in their homeland. This dry statistic says much. Today, Kazakhs comprise more than half the population of the country. Furthermore, there is high demographic potential in the youth of the nation – the average age is around twenty-five. Since it is considered entirely natural for the French

to predominate in France, the Russians in Russia and the Germans in Germany why does the demographic predominance of Kazakhs in their home territory inspire such questions? For this is a strong and positive phenomenon, a source of legitimate pride for the Kazakh people.

Second, the Kazakh nation today is represented at every stage of the social structure. We are creating the social structure of a modern market society. And the Kazakh nation has successfully acquired the new social positions and skills that are necessary for the function of national capital, a managerial stratum, a new state bureaucracy, military administration, diplomacy and so on. Even in the very recent past we could not dream that thousands of young Kazakhs would receive an excellent education at the world's leading universities and business schools. The state will continue to support this educational direction.

As the national outlook and consciousness broaden dramatically, they receive impulses for development on new technological, informational and conceptual bases.

New driving groups are appearing in Kazakh society. We may of course lament the deficiencies in this process. These certainly exist. But there is one indisputable fact – the Kazakh nation is rapidly mastering a whole spectrum of new social roles without which no nation can survive in today's competitive world.

Third, on the constitutional and international levels, we have the full legal basis of recognition of the whole of Kazakhstan as the historical and genetic territory of the Kazakh nation.

This is confirmed by all serious historical sources – Chinese, Arab, Byzantine, Russian and Iranian. This is confirmed by all the frontier decisions and demarcations between Kazakhstan and China. Analogous documents have been signed between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Kyrgyzstan on the delimitation of frontiers.

The recognition of this fact is of prime importance, and its legal and political reinforcement is of prime importance to the nation. The historical horizon of the existence of the Kazakh state extends far beyond the boundaries of the twentieth century, although our opponents have tried to dispute this. The national consciousness regulates the legitimacy of its longevity as a historical state with sensitivity.

* * *

Problems connected to the development of Kazakh national self-knowledge are by no means as simple or as trivial as they may appear at first glance. The question cannot be reduced to the development of the language or a national school. The Kazakh milieu still contains a very pure and powerful ethnic emphasis. In other words, we are speaking of an orientation towards *common ancestry, an extension of the sense of "common blood and common roots"* into macro-social measures. This is fully explained and partly justified, but stuck at the level of the ethnic rather than the national community.

The classical formula consists of the nation regarding itself as a society of people united by the concept of national self-definition.

We have achieved this idea on a legal level. Now it must come to dominate our values so that we may consolidate the nucleus of national consciousness.

There is another aspect to this idea. On a global scale, each Kazakh must recognise himself as a representative of the nation, and not of one social group or another. The importance of national identification and its predomination over social identification is a guarantee of the preservation and development of the national.

And here a problem arises which affects not only Kazakhs in the modern world. During the course of the entire twentieth century, various attempts were made to construct identity through civil, religious or ideological doctrines. Communist ideology is guilty of attempting to formulate identity on the basis of ideological principles, but it was not alone in this. Liberals have also attempted to replace the national universe with the principles of rationalism and individualism on a global scale. During the last decade of the twentieth century more fashionable but similarly defective attempts have been made to construct a civilisational system through the unification of national models. We are talking here not so much about the means of organising economic life as of value systems.

However, all these grandiose constructions have a place in history and are in part objectively justified, but they cannot alter the principal fact that national identification today remains the main means of "classification of human society". There exists no more promising and fitting instrument.

Speaking of national consciousness, we must examine and understand identity as corresponding above all to institutions which have all the attributes of an independent state. In global practice there is a generally accepted ideal of a state. There are international norms of an independent state. Most countries recognise an accepted model of a legitimate and democratic state. State identity presupposes integrity. Specialists identify three types of this integrity: organic, geometric and orthopaedic. The first arises as a result of the natural self-development of the ethnos. The second, as a result of migration of the ethnic group to a common territory. The third, as a territorial mix of ethnic groups with poor historical ties, united only through political force.

Without doubt Kazakhstan has organic integrity. It is the territory of national ethno-genesis and continual historic existence. On the one hand, the Kazakh ethnic group is an autochthonous

ethnos. On the other hand we are not talking about the construction of statehood only in twentieth-century terms, but of the restoration of the formerly existing Kazakh state. This is important to understand. The Kazakhs have strived over many centuries to restore their state in the fullest capacity as an autochthonous territory with organic integrity.

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Invasions and conquest of territory became an immutable attribute of statehood. Even in ancient times nomad peoples understood the necessity of preserving their territorial integrity, be it territory where the family was settled, the clan, union of tribes or the state.

In studying Chinese sources translated by the well-known Orientalist Iakinf (NY Bichurin), I discovered a very clear example of the understanding that one can part with much that is valuable, but the loss of territory is the first step towards the destruction of the state. This is the history of Shanyu Modu, the ruler of the Huns: "The ruler of Dun-khu sent a messenger to say that he wanted the thousand li horse (a horse able to run 1000 li per day), that had belonged to Tuman (the former ruler, father of Modu). Modu asked his dignitaries for advice. They said to him, "The thousand li horse is the treasure of the Huns. We should not give it up." Modu replied, "These people are our neighbours; why should we begrudge them one horse?" And so they gave Dun-khu the thousand li horse. After some time had passed Dun-khu suspected that Modu was afraid of him, and sent another messenger to say that he wanted Modu's Yanchzhi. Modu again consulted his advisors. They indignantly said to him: "Dun-khu is a man without conscience; he asks for Yanchzhi. We should declare war on him." Modu said: "These people are our neighbours; why should we begrudge them one woman?"

And so he took his beloved Yanchzhi and sent her to Dun-khu. The ruler of Dun-khu became even bolder. From the Hun lands to those of Dun-khu in the west lay a belt of uninhabited land that stretched for 1000 li. Both sides maintained border posts along it. Dun-khu sent a message to Modu that this abandoned land belonging to the Huns was not suitable for them and he would like to have it. Modu asked for advice from his courtiers and they said: "It is useless land, you can give it away." Modu flew into a rage and said: "Land is the foundation of the state; how can you give it away? Anyone who advises this will lose his head." (Bichurin, NY, *Collected testimony of the peoples inhabiting Central Asia in ancient times*, Vol. 1 ML, 1950 pp.47-48)

Our ancestors have taught us about the need to defend the Fatherland and its territories and this understanding has been transmitted from generation to generation. The issue of guarding the borders is a powerful factor in national identity and is still relevant today. It is studied by modern experts. For example, the American psychoanalyst of Turkish origin V Volcan writes: "National borders carry a very important psychological weight. Like the skin of a human being, they surround the nation, helping her to preserve her group identity. In conditions of stress the sense that each separate person shares a 'common skin' grows. Thus the guarding of the borders acquires a ritualised character." (Volcan, V, Obolonskii, A, *National problems through the eyes of psychoanalysis*, OHS, 1992, No. 6, p.38).

* * *

The history of our people is not only that of wars, military victories and defeats. It always has a creative character – we are talking about the foundation and strengthening of the state, the construction of cities and caravan routes, the writing of scientific treatises, the formation of our own culture.

Under the influence of Eurocentrism a contradictory image has been formed of the struggle between the nomads and settled peoples over the course of centuries.

Within this picture the nomads were always represented as barbarian hordes, the destroyers of the achievements of world civilisations and cultures. But, as time passes, researchers increasingly question the reality of this image.

Was there nothing but so-called "pure" nomads in Eurasia, and especially in Kazakhstan? For quite a long time now the research of archaeologists and historians has definitely proved the existence of a settled agrarian population on the steppes of Kazakhstan. These relatively small populations originated in places of over-wintering, where some members of nomad society gradually settled, above all impoverished families who did not own livestock. Mahmood Kashgari described them as "those who ... did not move to other places and did not engage in warfare, that is, the abandoned..." (Mahmood Kashgari, vol. 3, p. 12).

The basic crop was millet. The famous travellers Plano Carpini and Rubrik affirmed independently of each other that millet was the primary crop of the Kypchaks (*Travels in Eastern Countries* pp. 98, 124).

Archaeological data shows that the Kypchaks and members of other tribes practised agriculture in the basins of the rivers Syr Darya, Sarisu, Ishim and on the foothills of the Karatai. (Margulan, AK, *The Third Season of Archaeological work in Central Kazakhstan*. Izvestiya AN, KazSSR, Ser.Archaeol., 1951, issue 3, p.58).

For the Kypchaks hunting and fishing were important supplements to agriculture. The Eurasian traveller Petakhi wrote that: "The Kypchak are exceptionally long-sighted and excellent archers. They can kill a bird on the wing." (Margolin, PV, *Three Jewish Travellers of the eleventh to twelfth centuries*).

The other means of transition from nomadism to settled life was penetration into cities. Sygnak is an example of this, becoming in the twelfth century the political centre of the Kypchaks. Kayalyk and Karkurem were cities of the Kangly. The Kypchak and Kangly inhabited the cities of Khorezm such as Otrar, Samarkand and Bukhara. Undoubtedly there were artisans among the Kypchaks and Kangly, although these were basically producing for domestic demand. Trade mainly took the form of barter. Animals were the basic means of exchange.

Ibn Batutta testifies that the Kypchaks drove horses to India to sell. (SMIZO, vol.1, p. 539). Monetary means of exchange emerged at that time. When coins began to be used in Desht-i-Kypchak, Ibn Batutta wrote that a good horse could cost over 500 dinars, with 100 silver dinars paid for an average horse. (SMIZO, vol. 1, p.539). While preserving and restoring many institutions of the patriarchal type, the societies of the Kypchaks and Kangly had nevertheless already entered into and were strengthening and developing early forms of state relations.

* * *

Already in those years an elite had begun to form, who focused on the business of ruling the state. We, who for a long time talked about cooks governing the state,¹³ have been instilled with the notion that the feudal-Bai government was worthless. The elite were portrayed as extremely reactionary and harmful to the interests of the ordinary people. In fact, at that time in history the people greatly respected the leaders of the state, the nobility and aristocracy. Undoubtedly, these elite were people of different potential and capabilities. But it was precisely this milieu which

¹³ From a saying by Lenin that any cook should be able to govern the country.

guaranteed the development of the country and the nation under the conditions of pre-machine-age civilisation.

Not for nothing was the history of the people permeated by the activities of legal, bureaucratic and intellectual elites, both gifted and not so gifted. The idea of divinely ordained dynastic rule is as old as the world and legitimised the existing state. These concepts, together with religious beliefs, were the unique ideologies that were used to hold the state together.

Naturally, the conception of a divinely ordained dynasty was also a characteristic of the nomads. The basic religion of the ancient Turks was the worship of the Heavens (*Tengri*) and the Earth (Earth-Water, *Zher-Su*). In this coupling of divine powers the Heavens were the stronger.

The Turks believed the kagans ruled by the will of the heavens. They were "equal to the heavens and born of the heavens." "Heaven, governing from its [heavenly] heights raised my father Ilterish-kagan and my mother Ilbilgya-katun, [above the people]." The inscriptions of the Turkic kagans persistently invoked the favours of the heavens. They believed that Heaven and Earth-Water saved the Turkic people in difficult years. (*The History of KazSSR*, Vol. 1, p. 430)

* * *

An intensive process of the formation of clan elites and ruling families unfolded on the steppes of Kazakhstan and Eastern Europe. Already in the eleventh century a distinguished elite had emerged from this milieu, enjoying special clan influence and placed at the head of nomad tribes.

"Yuan-Shi" testifies to this: "Bukhumu. His ancestors from generation to generation were distinguished people of the Kangly tribe..." ("Yuan-Shi" 136 pp. 1502/27454).

"Ashabukhya (Asanbuka) is the descendant of the distinguished Khan family of the Kangly (Kango-vantszu)..." (Ibid, 136, pp. 27517/1565).

In his turn Rashid-ad-din writes: "the head of the Kypchaks at the time of Genghis Khan was the emir of the Kypchak tribes called Kundzhek... He had a son called Kumurbshi-kundzhe. Both father and son belonged to the people of the state of Kypchaks." (Rashid-ad-Din. *Collected Chronicles* Vol.1 book 1 p.151).

As Russian chroniclers noted, the descendants of the prince-khan stood at the head of the united Kypchak tribes. Judging by the data in chronicles, only those who were closely related to the Kypchak khans could succeed them. Sharukh was a khan of one of the Kypchak unions on the Black Sea steppe at the beginning of the twelfth century. He was succeeded by his son Otrak, and Otrak by his son Konchak. (*Collected works of Russian Chronicles* Vol. 11, p. 741).

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In deep antiquity runic inscriptions in honour of Bilge-khagan and Kul Tegin read: "If you, Turkic people, do not separate yourselves from your kagan, from your *beys*, from your motherland... you will live happily, you will remain in your homes, and you will be free from worries." (Klyashtorny, SG, *Ancient Turkic runic inscriptions as sources for the history of Central Asia*, M., 1964, p.62).

The supreme position of leaders of the nomad states and societies was reflected in their clothing. For example, the golden robes of the Issyksky warriors were worn not just for decorative effect. Their main significance was to glorify the person of the leader, raising him to the level of a sun-like godhead, standing on the very highest rung of the hierarchical ladder. (*History of the KazSSR*, vol.1, p.219).

Organising defence from external dangers, working in the capacity of "guardian and keeper of the internal life of the tribe", the Kypchak dignitary had the right to accept voluntary tribute and other services from the subjects he was protecting. The Kypchak and Kangly dignitaries organised raids on their neighbours and primarily on the settled peoples. At the same time, military ventures served to strengthen the khans' power and internal connections. The ordinary mass of Kypchaks and Kangly performed military service as a volunteer corps, led by clan and tribe leaders.

* * *

The best-known ideology of this type was the cult of Genghis Khan. About this VP Yudin wrote quite convincingly: "This cult was built into the process of the historical activity of Genghis Khan and his descendants, supplemented by elements of shamanism. These myths gave the Tatar-Mongols a powerful spiritual strength, equivalent to military might. But the cult of Genghis Khan was not only a religion, it was a world-view, an ideology, a philosophy, it sanctioned the building and structure of social bodies, political and legal systems, culturological doctrines, basic enlightenment, it was a means for regulating behaviour within the family and society ... In order to demonstrate the significance of this cult in the history of Turkic-Mongol peoples, we cite several generally known facts. The cult of Genghis Khan was the hallowed right of his family to wield power. The title 'khan' became the exclusive prerogative of his descendants. The consciousness of the Turkic-Mongols and many other peoples viewed any attempt to appropriate the title by a non-descendant as illegal and even immoral. The implementation of such an act would have been outside the law." (Yudin, VP, *The Hordes, white, blue, grey, golden...*, Utemish-khadzhi, Almaty, 1992, pp.19-20).

Members of the *tore* class formed the basis of the Kazakh state. The higher levels of Kazakh society were represented by the sultan, that is, a descendant of Genghis Khan through the male line.

They were the most influential force in Kazakh society. By birthright the children of Genghis Khan's descendants were accorded the title of sultan and their descendants too had the right to belong to this social group, that is, they had a monopoly on the right to the khanate throne, carried no obligations save military service, and were above the legal jurisdiction of the courts of the *beys*.

Each descendant, irrespective of his dynasty, could aspire to the title of khan in any place that preserved the traditions of the Mongol empire. Therefore, some of the Kazakh descendants of Genghis Khan became the padishahs of the Karakalpaks and Kyrgyz, some the khans of Khiva and Bukhara. It is interesting that the Orientalist and descendant of Genghis Khan Chokan Valikhanov wrote after many centuries: "The noion and zaisan (of the Kalmyks) belong to the white bones and the sultans of the Kyrgyz are the descendants of Genghis. The people believe they emanate from the rays of the sun and thanks to this absolutely supernatural and holy provenance, they enjoy power and respect" (Valikhanov, Chokan, "Notes on the Kyrgyz" *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, p.39). The Kazakh sultans were educated people. Khan Shigai, "growing up on the steppe and desert, composed poetry". Sultan Muhammed Mumin "was a knowledgeable and gifted man, he know a large part of 'Shah-namu' by heart and he read books aloud in a way that was pleasing to the ear."

Here we must name Kadyrpali-bek, son of Khoshumbek from the Dzhailar tribe, an early seventeenth-century author. He translated into Turkish the work of the famous thirteenth-centu-

ry Persian historian Rashid-ad-Din *Dzhami at Tavarikh* ("Book of Chronicles") and compiled a genealogy of the life and deeds of the Kazakh khans and sultans of the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries.

We have interesting information on the erudition of the Kazakh sultan-khans of Khiva in the eighteenth century. Warfare was ravaging the khanate and conditions of nomad life were not conducive to writing and study, but as a consequence of their privileged position the sultans occupied the educational heights of Kazakh society.

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The formation and development of a nation is impossible without the preservation of the historical memory of its people, and in a number of more significant events in the past this always and everywhere related to the time of the arising of national statehood, regardless of the social outlook of that state and what form of state construction was acceptable and possible at the time.

The foundation of the Kazakh khanate in 1466 was a crucial moment in the history of Kazakhstan. The political and social significance of this event rests on the fact that at that time the Kazakh khanate was the first national state in Central Asia to be founded by the Turkic people and not their predecessors or historical ancestors.

The creation of Kazakh nationhood consisted of forming an ethnic territory from the three ethno-territorial communities of the Old, the Middle and the Young Hordes due to ethno-political, productive and natural-geographical factors. After the formation of nationhood, the traditional types of tribal structure, production and cultural traditions were preserved.

In 1459, there were not merely separate tribes travelling in Semirechie, but a unification of clans and tribes, consisting of the population of the two *ulus*¹⁴ of Dzhanybek and Girei. These were not only political groupings but also a sub-ethnic type of social union. In this year on the expanses of the steppe of Semirechie the historical meeting took place which formed the Kazakh people and gave them their name. From that date the descendants of Dzhanybek and Girei were joined in an indissoluble union and the word “Kazakh” was born. In this way the Dzhanybek and Girei created the conditions for the foundation in 1466 of the Kazakh state.

In the history of Kazakh law that era is known for three pieces of legislation: *Kasym khannyn kaska zholy* (“the pure road of Khan Kasym”), *Yesim khannyn yeski zhily* (“The ancient road of Yesim”), which the folk legend links to the corresponding Khans Kasym and Yesim and the *Zhety-Zhargy* (“Seven orders”) of Taurke-khan. *Zhety-Zhargy* responds to the challenges of military-political and social life of seventeenth-century Kazakh society. These laws reflect the centuries-old dream of the Kazakh people to unite and found an independent state.

The conquests of Central Asia by nomad tribes known under the general name of Uzbeks, were notable events in the ethnopolitical history of the modern Uzbek and Kazakh peoples. These events, the territorial, socio-economic and cultural demarcation of the population of the former Uzbek *ulus*, happened because of the movements of the tribes of the *ulus* in Central Asia, and played a decisive role in the final establishment of a new ethnic society – the Kazakh nation. The expanses of Kazakhstan, known at that time by the name of eastern Desht-i-Kypchak, stopped being a place where the terms “Uzbek” and “Kazakh” were confused. The word “Uzbek” became a designation for the group of

¹⁴ An ulus is a settlement or nomad camp.

tribes who came from Central Asia with Muhammed Sheibaini-khan. Those Turkic-language-speaking tribes who were left to travel on the steppes of eastern Desht-i-Kypchak and Semirechie were finally amalgamated under the name of Kazakhs and their country was called Kazakhstan.

* * *

At that time yet another element of statehood was formed – its symbols. The military equipment of the Kazakh nomads included banners – the *tug* and *bunchuk*. The banners fulfilled at least two functions: they were important holy symbols and one of the effective means of marshalling forces on the march and in battle. Each family, each sultan of each *ulus* and, of course, the khan had their own banners. Tradition prescribed that the maximum number of banners for each khan would be nine. The expression “khan with nine banners” (*togyz tuly khan*) conveys an image of a most powerful leader.

According to witnesses of authors of the Middle Ages, the first Kazakh commanders were “khans with nine banners”. The signs were not only an external symbol of power, but also symbols of the military glory and honour of the leader and his warriors. As a sacred state symbol, the main banner, was carefully preserved in peacetime and was brought out only into war. The bearer of military banners was usually one of the members of the ruling classes in the Kazakh khanate of the dynasty of Genghis Khan – a sultan or influential bey, that is, the head of the kin or tribe. They were second only to the leaders of the Kazakh forces. The banner had a special role. The death of the military flag-bearer (*tushy*) always provoked confusion in the ranks of the warriors and the fall or loss of the main flag meant defeat. Tamerlane enlisted a personal flag-bearer, Tokhtamysh. At the decisive moment of battle at Konduchare the flag of Tokhtamysh

seemed to fall by itself. The horde's forces lost control and were destroyed (Zotov, O, "Eurasia on the roads to China: the ordeal in Sun-tsz'i", *Eurasian Messenger* No. 1(2). 1996, p.82).

* * *

Thanks to the deeds of the first Kazakh khans Dzhanybek and Girei, and of Burunduk-khan after 1480, there appeared a new ethno-political unity. It is well known that the Kazakh khans strengthened the territory of Western Kazakhstan, expelling their enemies, which included the ruler of the Astrakhan khanate. The Nogai were closely linked to the Kazakhs. Descendants of the Nogai horde, they inhabited territory that stretched from the Volga to the Urals. They took part in the complex ethnic process of forming the Kazakh nation in the Western region of Kazakhstan.

The last third of the fifteenth century saw the gradual incorporation of tribes and clans of Semirechie into the Kazakh khanate. Under the onslaught of the Kazakh rulers and for internal reasons the Moghul state collapsed. By 1514 the Moghul rulers had been ousted from Eastern Turkestan. At that time the Kazakh khans began the successful battle with Central Asian rulers in the towns of the Syr Darya region.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the Kazakh khanate became stronger and widened its frontiers, seizing new areas of Kazakh ethnic territory, upholding links with Central Asia, Astrakhan, the Siberian khanates and the Russian state.

One of the notable Kazakh khans, under whom the process of "land-gathering" accelerated, was Kasym. His basic foreign policy was the fight to strengthen Kazakh influence over the cities of the Syr Darya. The victory in 1510 of Kasym Khan over the forces of the Middle Eastern leader Muhammed Sheibani brought him many of the cities of Turkestan, including Tashkent

and Turkestan, along with their surrounding regions. Most of these cities remained under his rule for almost a century and a half, and in the late seventeenth to the early eighteenth centuries they were the places of residence of the Kazakh khans and the political centres of the Kazakh khanate. Kasym extended his territorial gains into west Kazakhstan, taking advantage of the collapse of the Nogai horde. In the second decade of the sixteenth century Kasym Khan finally reinforced his supremacy over the wide expanses of Kazakh territory.

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Yes, history is an endless theme and I would not want to imitate the famous character from the *Arabian Tales of the Thousand and One Nights*. But I think that the reader will forgive this exaggeration of historical narrative. Especially when we are talking about such a difficult theoretical problem as the organic integrity of our statehood.

Kazakhstan is a multi-ethnic state that defends the interest of all its citizens, regardless of nationality. This is the legal, political and de facto situation. As far as the solution to the problems of national identity of the Kazakh nation is concerned, one must not forget the political and civil identity of the people of Kazakhstan. These are different levels of identification. There is no contradiction here. It is a historical truth that the Kazakhs are trying to achieve clear-cut identification as a nation in order to preserve their national identity in a rapidly changing world. It is a historically objective and absolutely necessary movement towards the common civil identity of all Kazakhs. These processes are not contradictory, but, on the contrary, support each other along this basic vector.

* * *

Additional questions arise for Kazakhstan in relation to this. We recognise the fruitfulness and potential of the civil allegiance of Kazakhs to one or more global and regional cultural sources. We cannot deny the Eurasian nature of many Kazakh cultural contexts, nor our involvement in the great Islamic civilisation and historical cultural unity with the Turkic world. But these secondary forms of identification are possible only under the conditions of clear-cut national self-identification. Therefore, the significance of the world-view that exists in the consciousness of Kazakhs today is that it has been formed through our lengthy history of cooperation with other cultures and civilisations. The "main picture", however, is a national one and not one of religions or civilisations.

When people are taken prisoner in one form or another they are simply not in a condition to distinguish black from white. Sometimes in speaking about the "dissolution" of the national in the modern world we forget the obvious.

For example, there is perhaps nowhere in the world today with such a high level of integration, interpenetration of cultures, educational systems and linguistic pluralism as Western Europe. But this is precisely the part of the planet with the highest level of unification, including on the cultural level. This occurs not because of the rejection of the national state but precisely on the basis of it. The national state is the foundation of the integrative process.

* * *

We might imagine the developed national consciousness as a building with floors, walls and a ceiling. The ethno-cultural identity of the nation forms the building's foundation.

This identity is based on the historical memory of the people, in their reverence for their heroes and national geniuses, in the everyday emotional sense of participation in "their" spiritual whole. It is not about the battle for Anrakai¹⁵ or the building of the monument to independence in December 1996. It exists independently of the division of the people into separate groups, the division between secular history and religious tradition and between old and new.

It is what is simply "uniquely ours". It is that which others do not have in precisely the same shape or form. It is the natural sphere in which Kazakhs inhabit the world of culture. It is not bounded by time or space. And only thanks to this can the Kazakhs exert influence on other cultures and other ethno-cultural systems. It consists of the interconnection of cultures and ethnic groups. These do not fully coincide, there are distances between them, but every ethnic group defends, develops and creates its culture. And without culture the ethnos does not exist. The culture of the ethnos is its force field, its defence mechanism. It is the means of full interaction and contact with other ethnic groups. Universal values stand high within the ethnic culture, representing the incontestable authority of every Kazakh. The ethno-cultural identity is the value of the absolutes which strengthen the national population.

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However, one must never reduce national consciousness to the broad field of ethno-culture as a whole. The nation cannot exist without such pivotal entities as a national socio-cultural system. Yes, in the course of history the Kazakh nation has repeat-

¹⁵ The united armies of the Old and Young Zhuzes led by Abulkhair defeated the Djungars at the Battle of Anrakai in 1729.

edly displayed its creative, philosophic and military genius. But one of the most serious problems in the development of a united national consciousness among Kazakhs traditionally consisted of the lack of development of formal socio-cultural bodies. We are talking about the system of education, the means of mass information, scientific and cultural infrastructure. Those systems which were founded in the post-war period reflected not the interests of the national consciousness but primarily those of the totalitarian state.

An apparent paradox lies in the fact that during the development of formal bodies in the twentieth century Kazakh ethno-culture almost died. In reality there is no paradox. The whole aim of the development of these formal institutes was perfectly obvious – it was for rigid ideological control. Although even in these conditions the national spirit found a channel and broke through in the form of epic historical novels and in biting satire against national *mankurts*.

Today, the problem of development of the socio-normative systems of Kazakh national consciousness is not so dramatic, for we have founded strong mechanisms of support for Kazakh culture in the wider sense of the word, beginning with the educational system and ending with the electronic spread of mass information. But time does not stand still.

It is impossible today to build the socio-normative basis of Kazakh society on an archaic foundation. Some of the discussions on this subject cannot be taken seriously when it is claimed that private educational, scientific or cultural institutions are unnecessary, that the socio-cultural sphere must only operate with the support of the state, and so on.

The development of these bodies is necessary in order to found new types of mechanism which will enable the modern Kazakh nation to appear not only as the descendants of a great

nomadic culture but also in the capacity of a nation with competitive potential.

Within the framework of the statist model of the means of state control over the spiritual sphere this is simply impossible. The earlier the awareness of this arrives, the faster any form of misunderstanding will be removed. And in connection with this, we must not forget the dramatic experience of the twentieth century, the birth of totalitarianism, a monster unprecedented in society or history.



THE TOTALITARIAN
AND THE NATIONAL

*Previous generations bequeathed to us
Not so much the answers to questions
As the questions themselves.*

Seneca the Younger

Like all human inventions in history, totalitarianism was neither devil spawn nor born from any mystical force. For every totalitarian story begins with entirely reasonable slogans. We can endlessly recount the innumerable horrors of totalitarianism but these will not take us one step further towards understanding its strengths and weaknesses. Meanwhile, the experience of the twentieth century and, unfortunately, a pessimistic prospect of the twenty-first century demand not a factual account, but understanding.

* * *

The idea of the rationality and controllability of social and natural processes, born in the Enlightenment, had many consequences and gave a powerful impetus to the technological and economic revolutions. Even today's globalisation has its historical roots in the enormous revolution in consciousness which occurred several centuries ago. However, human thought has considerably more freedom for manoeuvre than the course of history itself. And being pushed to a level of social hyperbole, the idea of rationalism and controllability began to have terrible offshoots in the many social utopias that were built in the rigid government of social life in the name of the highest ideals.

Of course, to draw a direct connection between the utopias of More and Stalin, Campanella and Mussolini, would be the equivalent of comparing an ancient carriage on the Scythian steppes to a Cadillac. But one must never blind oneself to the connection between idealistic utopias and dictatorships. Both arise from the illusion of full control over social life in the name of absolute goals.

The social theories that have been born over preceding centuries, from primitive revisions of Marxism to the innovations of D'Annunzio and the revolutionary ideas of the Russian Bolshe-

viks, were based on this simple and terrible idea, which asserted that all humanity can be driven into a schematic framework. The naïveté of the architects of this idea is truly astonishing. It resulted in the “reshaping of human material”, the possibility of losing half the world’s population in a nuclear war against capitalism, the militarisation of labour, concentration camps and the strict regulation of private life.

In the last few years it has become fashionable to explain totalitarianism in terms of the personalities of one leader or another. Yes, the hysterical character of one and the paranoia of another played their roles, but these must not be overemphasised. At totalitarianism’s root lies the horrific logical and historical defect in any totalitarian doctrine – the assumption that both the individual and human society are mechanical constructions which can be broken and rebuilt in accordance with a certain plan. For it is symbolic that the most popular totalitarian anthem was- “We are building a new world.” And this world was to be built on the ruins of one that had been forged over millennia.

The English philosopher and historian A Toynbee said: “The human being was astonishingly innovative and enterprising in the technical and applied sciences and no less shockingly helpless and uninventive in the field of politics. To this day the number of alternative political systems has not been great and the majority of them, judging by experience, are unsatisfactory. The case for democracy as a valid system may be expressed in a negative form: democracy is the least bad political system that humans have yet come up with. However, its serious failing is the tendency of the people who live under a parliamentary democracy to place the interests of the political party higher than that of the nation.” It is possible, therefore, that democracy may grow into totalitarianism and even fascism.

Totalitarianism was especially destructive for the national in all its forms. National history, woven so delicately and subtly over centuries and millennia, was given a sudden and brutal lobotomy. The authentic history of the Kazakh steppe with its great rulers and astounding artistic creativity was rewritten as a “barbaric prehistory”, of no significance to this new doctrine of total reconstruction. We still have not freed ourselves from this image which is so destructive to national consciousness.

Totalitarianism ran counter to the whole weight of national history in an amazingly insidious way – it broke down the unified living flow of our nation’s past into the class struggle. This process of imposing an already-formatted picture of class society of an industrial type onto Kazakh society in one elusive movement turned the Kazakhs into a pale imitation of unknown and mysterious others.

Meanwhile, authentic Kazakh history is far removed from the formulae and methodology of class analysis.

This particularly applies to the system of Kazakh social relations, based on the enormous role played by the internal clan support system. It also applies to the special role of the power of the khanate which, not only in its grim representation within Soviet historiography, but even at times today, is interpreted as a negative phenomenon. On the other hand, there is no need to idealise this phenomenon with uncritical euphoria, which also happens at times today. For it must be remembered that tragic events in national history are directly connected to vicious competition among the steppe elite.

However, in order to evaluate the traditional power bodies over the many centuries of our history, we must look further. The preservation of this vast territory is not only the fruit of the cour-

age of ordinary *batyrs*¹⁶; it was also the product of the wisdom of Kazakh khans and sultans, thanks to whom Kazakhstan entered the ranks of the ten largest countries of the world.

In ancient and modern history, under the pressure of powerful empires and internal conflicts, the steppe leaders were able to preserve what was most important: the national identity and the national territory. Perhaps they did not think of this in such fashionable terms, but they intuitively sensed their role in history. Today, after the elapse of a terrible century, we, as the descendants of our great predecessors, can without reservation say that the role they played in national terms is huge and positive.

Totalitarianism tried to imbue Kazakh mass consciousness with a simple and deadly belief in the absolute sell-out nature and destructiveness of the Kazakh elite. This belief created a national sense of nihilism and disrespect for the great names of the past. In a paradoxical form it has repercussions today. Frequent misunderstandings arise over the complexity of this modern stage of national history. This is a direct legacy of the Soviet past, which condemned anything done from above as anathema.

* * *

Totalitarianism has an utterly chilly relation to tradition. According to its doctrine, society must be rebuilt from a clean sheet. Tradition for the most part is of a national or religious nature. We are not talking here of the anecdotal exercises of some "national theoreticians" who reduce our history to the process of being civilised by our neighbours. We are talking about something altogether more serious.

As a means of transmitting accumulated experience, tradition performs the role of defending national qualities. For Kazakh

¹⁶ A batyr was a knight, or warrior.

society, which found itself under centuries of foreign influence, tradition played a huge role in safeguarding the national identity. The totalitarian regime had a dramatic effect on the development of the national consciousness by breaking with former cultural traditions, behaviour models, family relations and so on.

We may note that one indisputable quality of totalitarianism was its rigidity in “deciding the national question” in comparison to all previous epochs. The Kazakhs lost more of their national character in those few decades of the twentieth century than they had done over the course of many preceding centuries. It is commonly known that this did not only happen to the Kazakhs. There are quite enough examples. Is this coincidence? By no means.

It is not accidental that totalitarianism began its ethnic experiments with the liquidation of the national elites of all the national regions and republics. This brutal philosophy brooks no competition on an intellectual level. At the beginning of the century the Kazakh elite were exceptionally advanced from the point of view of political ideas and technology, even by modern standards.

They were altogether a unique phenomenon in the Asiatic world at that time. The Kazakh statesmen posed a special threat to the totalitarian regime, for they were fully capable of building a modern state and were not trying to introduce archaic forms of political constructions which would have been foredoomed to failure.

The other “shining totalitarian formula” was the replacement of national consciousness with that of the social group. How were they to wash away the cemented national consciousness?

Their one possibility was to replace national identification with that of the group. A supplementary factor in the rupture of national self-consciousness was the introduction of all kinds of myths and negative stereotypes.

It is not that totalitarian ideologues were so illiterate and removed from the real meaning and influence of ancestral history in the modern consciousness of the Kazakhs. There were some undoubtedly gifted and highly erudite people among the ideologues.

It is simply that their relationship to history was defined by very rigid limits. Their task was to convince the people, who had a clear and precise vision of their great national history, of the fact that they must begin their existence again on a clean sheet, of the fact that Kenesary was a cruel khan, and that somehow Kolbin¹⁷ was the benefactor of the Kazakhs. The conscious depreciation of national history is a generic feature of totalitarianism. To overcome the psychological legacy of totalitarianism we must not only plan our future but also reinterpret the past.

* * *

Apart from short periods when warmer relations were necessary, totalitarianism and religion were in principle incompatible, as history attests.

Totalitarian and religious doctrines are incompatible in their logic and world-views. It has been noted more than once that totalitarianism bears many resemblances to religion. It is the promise of building heaven on earth. It is the assertion of eternal truths and the absolute nature of those truths. It is the achievement of the end goal, after which all of world history will come to an end.

However, religion is based on several moral postulates and is connected with the attainment of final union with the mysteries of God. Totalitarianism is based on an oversimplified rationality

¹⁷ Gennady Kolbin (1927–1998) was the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakh SSR from 16 December 1986 to 22 June 1989.

and the rejection of God. It is hard for me to evaluate such questions that are highly complex, even for specialists, but, by studying the history of our people, I reach a certain conclusion.

Religious doctrines are distinguished from the totalitarian in their deep underlying moral traditions and their understanding of the principal limits to the human mind and human actions, especially in large societies such as nations. Where religion turns to God, totalitarianism offers clumsy solutions; where religion bases itself on moral principles, totalitarianism waves the flag of group interests, and where religion respects tradition, totalitarianism destroys it.

Is it possible for two such integral doctrines to enjoy a full and peaceful coexistence? One must not delude oneself. To believe this would be the equivalent of believing the proponents of totalitarianism who suddenly appealed to religious bodies after a bloodbath. It is sometimes argued that this happened several decades ago. But a short historical memory is precisely what the totalitarian regime tried to hammer into the heads of the people. One must never forget totalitarian "methods of deciding the religious question". And the question is not only of this but also of the history of the actual relations between the two.

Because of its universal nature, totalitarian ideology could not pretend to be a substitution for any religious system. Precisely because of this, relations between totalitarianism and religion took on a strained character, regardless of creed, geography, history or nationality. This applies always and everywhere without exception.

The entire history of the Kazakhs, especially the religious history of the people, was plunged into a sea of destructive criticism. Let us take such a concrete fact as the level of literacy among the population. The Kazakhs were included among illiterate peoples only because of totalitarianism's refusal to recognise religious Islamic education. Meanwhile, a huge number of Kazakhs spoke

the language of the Prophet and were literate in the fullest sense of the word. But, until recent times, the notorious illiteracy of the Kazakhs at the start of the twentieth century was presented as the indisputable truth. However, the problem is a good deal wider than this. With the rooting out of religious feeling in the people, totalitarianism decided to impose a parallel task – that of forcible “cleansing”. Without this crushing of religion it would not have been as successful as it was in imposing a unifying ideology onto the state. And today we must clearly understand the reasons for the effectiveness of totalitarian ideology.

* * *

This broad theme has become entangled today in a light-weight interpretation of all types of state ideologies. Why does the Kazakh constitution state its rejection of single social ideological monopoly? Is this due to fashionable liberal formulae or more substantial reasons? What is the relation of the national idea to the ideology of the state? Why must we not follow the path of the forcible introduction of ideological principles?

All these are complex issues and there is a temptation to employ a simplified schema which is unlikely to elicit strong social opposition and which significant layers of the population will happily support.

Unfortunately, we suffer from short historical memories and forget about the bloody results of simplistic approaches. Unfortunately, we forget about the real and not the mythical history of the Kazakh people.

Unfortunately, we find ourselves still under the psychological influence of totalitarian thought.

Yes, we can build a single ideology in the form of a beautiful and uplifting text, then organise a nationwide study completely shutting off all sources of alternative information and build an

ideological platform to declare this text to be a full and comprehensive explanation of reality. We can do all this.

And then “hammer the idea like nails into the head” and gradually expel all dissenters from the country. And then physically wipe out anything that cannot be reconciled to this monopoly on the truth.

Can it be possible that we have not learned from the fate of totalitarian or semi-totalitarian ideological systems of the twentieth century? Has the bloody meat grinder of the freedom-loving Kazakh people not taught us anything?

But it is not only a question of history. It is a question of the actual complexities of economic and political construction in Kazakhstan. It is not accidental that totalitarianism viewed opposition with great suspicion.

I remember how seriously opposition was divided into antagonistic and non-antagonistic, as though there were some sort of divine classifier whispering in one’s ear “Well, this argument is antagonistic and this one non-antagonistic.” There were also basic forms of opposition and non-basic, and the poor students learned these classifications as though they were verses of the Koran or biblical sermons.

But an examination of the principal contradictions and difficulties of developed societies must never be simply a theoretical exercise. The life of modern Kazakhstan convincingly proves the existence of conflicting interests of different groups. For the state to use pressure to promote one political ideology at the expense of another is the first step back into the past, towards totalitarianism.

The national idea has a different basis. It is built above all on the clear understanding of national identity. It matures and grows within society itself. It does not have a false character. It is not the revelation of ideological gurus but the product of an understanding of their national tasks on the part of millions of people.

The formation of the national idea is possible only on the basis of a new reading of our history. Without this, it is clear how the creation of an ideological mutant would end. From recent history everyone remembers the existence of parallel ideological worlds – a world of official ideology and a world of the real values and attitudes of the people.

Without the enormous and conscious effort of millions of people, based on their own roles in the complex and dramatic thousand-year history of the ethnos, it will be impossible to construct a national idea. Therefore, within the coordinates of the twenty-first century, the understanding of national history is the first step towards the formation of the national idea and not the other way around.

But the problem is not exhausted by this. History is not only a phenomenon of the past. To a significant degree it is a projection into the future. We understand this simple fact by rejecting the naïve simplifications of the aforementioned historical objectivism. In other words, history has huge motivating and explanatory powers.

What is so important for us in the fact of unification of Kazakh clans into Hordes? Is it just that unification helped to defeat foreign enemies? Of course it was not only this. It was a model of the common national consensus reached by our ancestors in a critical situation. But if we go deeper, then it is a reflection of the deep internal national integration of Kazakh society in those very complex circumstances. The Kazakh national consciousness was always advanced, regardless of simplistic sociological representations of it as backward and tragically divided.

Such unity is, above all, important today under completely different technological and geopolitical conditions. Therefore, the meaning of the national historical fact lies not in the search for the archaic, no matter how appealing, but in the discovery of absolutely modern motifs, understandable and accessible to the

consciousness of the modern Kazakh, motifs that determine his behaviour in a modern context.

The formula for the national idea lies in the space of national history. To search for it in other fields will inevitably slide into a universal construction of either a liberal or a totalitarian utopia.

But there is another component to this problem. What is the particular effectiveness of totalitarian ideology? It is well known that in building a political system with an integrated ideology, the use of force plays a key role. The path rests on the suppression of opposition, an information blackout and so on. To this day these banal and well-tested weapons invoke the admiration of some of our orthodox thinkers, who announce, "What a great ideology that was! Modern ideology is not a patch on that ..." They do not understand the simple and provable historical facts that this ideology was destroyed together with its foundation, and that the ideological exercises of totalitarian thinkers were a strange mixture of a primitive grasp of Marxism and provincial bravado.

In fact, we can make a special study of all the ideological works of those seventy years and convince ourselves of their distance from the world of thought and alienation from real life. Which of these endless tomes applies to modern reality? Where are these millions of kilos of waste paper?

But how then to explain the survival of the ideological stereotypes of the past? Besides nostalgia for the time of one's youth, which is fully comprehensible, there was the prospect of equality through relative material abundance. The freeing of humans from suffering caused by the necessity of making one's own decisions under the very difficult conditions of the transition to a market economy is a less trivial aspect of totalitarian ideology.

I believe that nostalgia for times of ideological unity is linked to the fact that totalitarianism offers a psychologically comforting solution to such complex issues as the life of the individual and that of society as a whole. Being in fact forged from a single

piece of steel, totalitarianism offers simple and comprehensible solutions to all questions – from the primary nature of matter to the unification of the Soviet people.

The suspicious simplicity of the most complex existential questions gave totalitarian ideology a certain psychological attractiveness. It was calculated on the basis of a fairly low level of education.

“The purging of the intellectual territory” was carried out in advance. The country was very quickly “liberated” from the national intelligentsia, who in no way could be satisfied by this simplistic black and white view of the world.

This simplicity of this vision stemmed from a social construct in which there was no place for alternative political groups or strata.

Two eminent revolutionaries, the famous Robespierre and Lenin, decided that their goals were so beautiful and their attainment so worthwhile that force seemed a justifiable means to an end. As a result, for the creation of heaven on Earth, they both unleashed terror and Lenin created the totalitarian regime.

Only totalitarian society could explain all the complexities of the socio-economic, political and cultural life of society with a few ideological clichés. It is time to understand this. Several of our apologies for theoreticians who call for a return to total ideological control fail to understand that sooner or later the meat grinder will swallow them too.

* * *

The relation between totalitarianism and national modernisation is perhaps the most difficult question. To negate the enormous technical and technological advances of Kazakhstan in the twentieth century with crude polemic is simply meaningless. The question must not be posed at this level, but at that of the value

and methods of modernisation. It is more important to understand another aspect. Yes, many factories and plants were built. But no one considered the ecological problems or the economic effectiveness of their production. They were highly wasteful of energy and resources. That is why they all stalled when faced with competition. If all plants in the former GDR were dismantled, what hope is there for ours?

The point is also that this modernisation was imposed with the naked use of force. Modernisation occurred at the cost of the physical destruction and banishment of a third of the Kazakh nation. The figures are well known and there is no need to repeat them here.

The Kazakh *aul* always remained a source of potential national rebirth and a marker of national identity. The purely economic and class goals of the totalitarian regime were accompanied by the outright destruction of the basis of national production. In the Kazakh national consciousness during the course of the whole twentieth century this intuitive feeling always existed. But open political analysis was always pushed aside.

Today, many over-emotional writers reduce everything to the conflict between nations. However, that is a simplification of the real problem. There is no reason to blame a Russian or Ukrainian peasant for being exiled to Kazakhstan. The problem lies in the blind conflict between totalitarian modernisation, of which the builders of socialism were so proud, and the real interests of the Kazakhs as a nation.

Before the beginning of the social experiment of the socialist state, the Kazakh *aul* upheld the tradition of blood and family ties of society to a significant degree.

Kazakh society was based on the mechanism of clan relations and was quite distinct from the rigid social polarisation of the Russian village. Kazakh clan society fitted harmoniously into the existing ecological environment, and did so regardless even

of two hundred years of colonial pressure. All the components of the Kazakh socio-ecosystem were interconnected and fulfilled certain and, at times unique, function in the regulation of Kazakh national life. The forcible destruction of one or several elements brought catastrophe to the entire ethnic organism, to the point of severing the mechanism of national production.

Today, on the basis of detailed historical research, several specialists conclude that, for example, within the structure of the Kazakh *aul* the *bey* played a non-feudal role in the system of agricultural relations. His property was an insurance fund for the entire clan community. The extreme character of the natural environment, the vulnerability of livestock to natural disaster, the continual external threats to small nomadic clan groups, and so on, resulted in a real danger of starvation. Under these circumstances the potential of rich clan members created a powerful reserve for all members of the clan.

Relations in the Kazakh *aul*, which of course involved some degree of servitude, at the same time allowed not only the retention but also the augmentation of the common herd of animals in a relation and proportion that allowed the ecological balance of the vast territory to be preserved over the course of centuries.

Mass collectivisation and the liquidation of the *beys* as a social group created a nationwide catastrophe. We have to acknowledge the ability of the totalitarian dictators to put their destructive beliefs into effect. Already, in the spring of 1919 Lenin was considering ways in which he could undermine the economic strength of the *bey* in the auls and he said openly: "It is evident that sooner or later you will have to face the question of the redistribution of cattle" (Dachshleiger, GF, *The Socio-economic Reformation of the Aul in the Countryside*, Almaty 1965. p.179).

The tragedy that occurred at the end of the 1920s and beginning of the 1930s brought the most terrible blow to the Kazakhs in their entire history as a nation. The sources of this trag-

edy must not be examined without taking into account the fact that they were a direct reprisal against powerful *bey* ownership. The infamous decree of August 1928 on the confiscation of large property holdings led to the expropriation of 700 large holdings. These independent insurance funds of the Kazakh clans were simply withdrawn from the self-regulated ecological and economic system. This most important economic safeguard was devastated, which led to the breakdown of social and ownership relations. In sum, a very subtle means of guaranteeing the life of the ethnos, which had been worked out over centuries, had been destroyed. It sowed the seeds for a future ethnic catastrophe.

There is another problem of modernisation that totalitarianism brought to the Kazakhs. The development of totalitarian industrialisation came up against the problem of grain production. Without exaggeration, the production of grain was practically inseparable from the buying of machinery and equipment from abroad. Despite all the demagogic sloganeering, industrialisation was in fact carried out through the importation of technology on a mass scale. Bread and raw materials were a basic source of hard currency. As a consequence, the population of vast areas of the country died of starvation. In order to substantiate this, I put forward some simple statistics which reveal the true cost of totalitarian modernisation more clearly than any lengthy discussion.

In 1928 the export of grain from the USSR consisted of 0.1 million tonnes; in 1929, 1.3million; in 1930, 4.8 million; in 1931, 5.2 million. (Gordon, AA, Klopov, EV, "What was that?", M., 1989, p.81)

It was a period of the cruellest famine in Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine. It was the price of the modernisation which today is praised so highly by our nostalgic supporters of the totalitarian past.

But for the Kazakhs this had some no less nightmarish consequences. At that time, interest grew in the vast territories of

the eastern states and above all in Kazakhstan. Already in 1930 the agriculturalist and People's Commissar YA Yakovlev reported from the platform of the sixteenth congress of the Communist Party: "According to the figures ... from 50 to 55 million hectares in Kazakhstan may be regarded as suitable arable land, of which around 36 million hectares lie in northern regions ..." (Sixteenth congress of the Communist Party, Typed transcription, M., 1930, p. 584)

But this demanded the clearance of the local population from the territory and the destruction of the natural habitat of Kazakh agriculture. Kazakh nomad arable land stretched out over hundreds of kilometres. At that point the traditional Kazakh means of production stood in irreconcilable opposition to the demands of totalitarian modernisation.

The nomadic way of life of the Kazakhs came to be regarded not simply as a particularly old-fashioned way of life, but as inadmissibly antediluvian and archaic. At the time, no one thought about the destruction of the ecological and economic means of existence of an entire nation. For a quarter of a century the seizure of virgin lands took place as though they were uninhabited territory. It was scarcely recalled that this territory had been intensively farmed for centuries. This catastrophe in traditional farming became irreversible. Five centuries before these events, Hasan Sabit-uly, famous among his people as Asan Kaigi, wrote:

How can the wild pond goose
 Know the worth of the vast steppe!
 How does the buzzard, bird of the steppe
 Know the worth of the pond!

How can any old *aul* gossip
 Know the worth of dignity!

How could he who has never wandered the steppe
Know the worth of the land!

(*Poets of Five Centuries* – Almaty 1993, p.31)

For the modernisers of the totalitarian persuasion the Kazakh land became a field of social experimentation, of “empty social spaces”.

But the emptiness was imaginary. The Kazakh land was not only a site for businesses and cities, highways and power stations. It is a land so saturated with national symbols that the scorched plateau of Ustyurt, despite all the laws of physics, has the same “temperature” in the national consciousness as the cosmic cold of the seven-thousand-metre-high Tian Shan mountain range.

For totalitarianism this was insignificant and could be completely dismissed; for the national consciousness it was sacred. For this reason, along with many others, the demands of the nation were irreconcilable with those of totalitarianism.

This attitude towards national history emerged during the years of conquering virgin lands. Incredibly cynical and ignorant slogans such as “cultivate the lands where no human feet have ever trodden”, or “neglected lands”, led to a nihilistic attitude towards the history of the Kazakh people on the part of the hundreds of thousands of young people arriving in Kazakhstan. The system inculcated them with the idea that they were the first to arrive on the land. Fortunately, with the course of time everything has been put into perspective, and an understanding of the great cultural and productive history of this astonishing and inspiring land has become a part of the shared spiritual world of all Kazakhs. However, the totalitarian experiments with our national history, memory and land must never be forgotten.

In its shocking twentieth-century form, Soviet totalitarianism presents itself as a fantastical mix of fairly advanced technology with an extreme oversimplification of the entire social fabric.

No pharaoh or dictator of the past could create such a universal system of control as the totalitarian system of this century.

The reason for this is that the technical potential of ancient totalitarian societies was not comparable with that of the first half of the twentieth century. The key factors of power, information, transport, economics, education and ideology – the generous gifts of several technical revolutions – were, through the ironic caprice of history, placed at the service of the regime, which simultaneously strove for a drastic simplification of the social structure and the full direction of social processes and the personal life of the individual.

This, by the way, often complicates an understanding of the true nature of such regimes. For against a background of distinct technological advance they created the illusion of economic progress. But one must never believe that only the force of propaganda led a significant section of the world in the recent past to choose the socio-political and economic priorities of the totalitarian state.

An attentive study of the history of the century gives rise to at least three questions.

First, what happened to the nation during the technological changes that the regime brought about? The answer is simple and unpleasant. The social structure, social bodies, traditions, the models of human community worked out over centuries, and moral and ethnic values were not just altered in a way that is unavoidable in any great transformation, they were mercilessly crushed. The entire history of the Kazakhs under totalitarianism presents a classic illustration of this thesis. All the subtle mecha-

nisms of self-regulation of the national organism, historic continuity, the way of life itself, and the normal historical evolution of the nation were destroyed. Unfortunately, much of what the nation had been able to preserve up to the threshold of the new millennium was lost forever.

The many paradoxes in our national consciousness, and the adherence to some stereotypes that are fatal to the nation, have their many sources in this period which was so tortuous for the national spirit.

Do all technological revolutions bring such catastrophic results? By no means. Most countries in the world survived technological modernisation in the second half of the century. They did not undergo such dramatic ruptures in Asia, Latin America, Europe and North Africa. The question lay not so much in the technological revolution as in the means by which modernisation was carried out. Totalitarianism implemented a forcible and bloody means of modernisation, which is not the only possible way. It was the only way allowed by the belief system of totalitarianism, and this characterises its anti-national nature.

Second, totalitarianism granted itself the right to go against long-established state interests. The harsh ideological systems of international relations hid a more long-term phenomenon – the centuries-old geopolitical constants. I am convinced that the tragedy of the state of Russia, for example, is connected in many ways with the fact that during the course of almost the whole century, the totalitarian system of ideological priorities did not allow it to formulate clearly its geopolitical priorities as a state with a long history.

With the fall of totalitarianism came the realisation of the fact that the totalitarian state had brought to a dead end the foreign political compass of a very powerful European state. The building of a new course for Russian foreign policies on the basis of the appropriate principles of national interest is an extremely difficult

process, and the huge historical responsibility which lies on the shoulders of the democratic leadership of modern Russia must be understood.

However, the totalitarian method of resolving international political problems still sits firmly in the general consciousness; at its base lie the methods of pure force. That their bloody ventures misfired over the course of the past twenty years seems to have been quickly forgotten. The conclusion is simple. Today, any technological solution to problems in foreign policy on the basis of totalitarianism is a dead end, above all for the nation in whose name this scenario is carried out.

The third and most uncomfortable issue for totalitarianism is that it lost the main battle of the century – the technological one. There is a poorly studied question which demands special research on the internal connections of totalitarianism as a political doctrine with the technological possibilities and conditions of the twentieth century. It seems that the intuitive discoveries of literature and the social utopias of the past apparently have not yet been properly evaluated by science. But there is undoubtedly a connection.

A political doctrine trapped in a certain technological field and in distinct concrete historical circumstances did not give birth to such a dark mutation accidentally. To view totalitarianism as a historical accident would be an unforgivable error. Unfortunately, the recurring and superficial neglect in relation to this phenomenon as a finished stage of history is absolutely understandable and banal, and conceals a potential danger in the future and not in the past. As is well known, history punishes those who do not learn its lessons.

However the “technological field”, created supplementary possibilities for totalitarianism, which sprung up in the course its natural evolution. For the last decade totalitarianism found itself lagging behind. It is possible to explain this with some partial

reasons but it is more important to see the wood for the trees. The closed nature of totalitarian society was unable to reconcile itself with the main social preconditions for technological innovation – the openness of informational sources. And the further this went, the greater the ineffectiveness of the totalitarian social regulation of processes. Thus it was led into a dead end.

In this way, the question of totalitarian social construction is not only a question of a correct understanding of history. It is a question about the effectiveness of this model for building a society. Totalitarianism in the context of modern informational and technological reality is doomed to be left behind. The nation that is ruled by totalitarianism is doomed to be left behind.

Therefore, the national consciousness must not just engage in angry philippics over the slaying of the dragon, but also over the chronic national retardation, to prevent a return to totalitarian tendencies within the ideology and politics of the independent state.



THE INDEPENDENT
STATES OF
CENTRAL ASIA AND
THE LESSONS
OF HISTORY

*The sacred duty of every one of us –
Is to multiply the number of our friends.*

Abai

It is a well-known fact that for many years the Central Asian peoples, as a result of their separation and disconnectedness, fell under the influence of the surrounding imperial states – China, the empire of Genghis Khan and, finally, of tsarist Russia. Could a similar situation arise in the future? We have no reason to reject this possibility.

In connection with this, let us return to the history of the fraternal Central Asian states and world experience, and project these models into the future for a clearer understanding of possible tendencies in the development of the region.

Let us start by remembering imperial power's main strategic political principle of divide and rule, which aimed to separate colonial peoples, and examine its application to the Central Asian region. This will enable the peoples of Central Asia to learn the following lessons.

The first lesson concerns the politics of the Soviet state in relation to the region. Before the mid 1920s identity in Central Asia was based on: 1) religion; 2) region; 3) clan. To the question: "Who are you?" the reply was "I am a Muslim from such-and-such district and such-and-such tribe." Only in the mid 1920s did Russia begin to divide the region on national-territorial lines.

In the literal European understanding of the word, the nationalities of Central Asia were founded in this period. Soviet power gave a political colouring to cultural and regional identification. As the related peoples of Central Asia were brought under Soviet military and political control, and as the land was divided according to national-territorial criteria, the establishment of pseudo-autonomy underlined and significantly deepened differences in language and culture.

The imperial principle of divide and rule was put to the fullest use by the People's Commissar for the nationalities of the RSFSR, Joseph Stalin, the main architect of all territorial and national division in the Soviet Union. For Stalin, any united system

of government that took into account the centuries of historical, cultural, linguistic and ethno-genetic integration of the Turkic people in Central Asia was unacceptable, as it would undermine the power of Moscow in the region. Even the Tatar-Bashkir republic was divided into Tatarstan and Bashkiriya, while the Orenburg region remained within Russia so that Tatars and Bashkirs would not have direct contact with the peoples of Central Asia to whom they were so closely related.

With the establishment of Soviet power in the region, the relatively small numbers of intelligentsia were gradually destroyed. These people had understood the strength and potential of a united political system, and the efficiency of the cultural-civilisational community of Turkic peoples in Central Asia. Their places were taken by local Bolshevik leaders; ninety per cent of whom consisted of colonisers and people who had been sent out from Moscow.

Between 1920 and 1950 the cultural-identificational stratum of the Central Asian population was destroyed; an entire group was snapped off from the chain of generations, resulting in a break in the links between them.

The generation before ours learned a new system of values, the central points of which were political and ideological, and rejected the common cultural-historical roots of the Central Asian people. The Turkic population of Central Asia had a great deal in common, but was deliberately alienated from each other by the central power which divided them along territorial and national lines. This partially underlies the mistrust that exists today between the state functionaries of the countries of Central Asia. Many of them came through the party school of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and know better than anyone else all the dangers and weaknesses caused by the break-up of Central Asia.

In Soviet history, as in all history, those who were called to write an apology for state politics, usually interpreted the histories of the Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Uzbeks and Turkmen as separate from each other. This occurred because the leadership of the Soviet state wanted new generations in Central Asia to think of themselves as separate peoples with nothing in common. The disintegration of Central Asia was advantageous to the Moscow government, as it directed peoples along different paths of development so that they could be pitted one against the other.

On gaining independence, many of us reproached our forebears for losing the chance to retain Central Asian independence after the fall of the Russian empire in 1917. However, at that time we did not have the requisite intellectual, economic or military potential for the establishment of independence.

In the course of the twentieth century we have been given the unique opportunity to establish and preserve our independence for the second time. In contrast to 1917, our republics had amassed enough potential for this by 1990. However, in order to have the greatest effect, this potential could be realised only with the cooperation and mutually agreed efforts of the peoples of the region.

The second lesson is the historic example of the development of state nationalism in Europe. With the gaining of independence a new threat to the Central Asian countries arose – that of state nationalism. State nationalism was born in Western Europe with the end of the religious wars and the signing of the peace of Westphalia in 1648, in which the religion of the sovereign determined the religion of the people who were his subjects.

With the development of the capitalist system, international trade, rapid population growth and the first signs of urbanisation, the ruling elites of European countries required a new form of loyalty from the population, and to control and mobilise this into new forms of activity. The old forms of social, religious and

regional identification became extremely outdated and inadequate in the face of new realities.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, nationalism finally squeezed out old forms of identification and became the main element in the building of European states. At that time nationalism became a fundamental feature of modern European states, where the elite could no longer use their former autocratic methods to control a rapidly developing society.

Together with this, nationalism aided the expansion of such European states as the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain and then France and Great Britain and, at the end of the nineteenth century, Germany and Italy. At that time these countries divided the world into zones of influence.

Besides this, nationalism helped to establish modern international relations and a world system to which all new states had to adapt. The inequality of economic development in different countries, which was the very essence of the capitalist system, was characteristic of this stage of development and led to Germany entering the world stage somewhat later than other European empires. The conflict of national interests of the leading capitalist countries resulted in the First World War.

As a result of the inconclusiveness of the war, Europe was gripped by a new wave of nationalism. Borders in their modern form appeared, with no-man's-lands, a national Diasporas, visas and customs. The economic depression (a consequence of the unbalanced, uncoordinated growth of the economies of Europe and America), the closing of markets to foreign economies, economic autarchy, the development of a trend towards absolute self-sufficiency, all this called new forms of nationalism into being. Against a background of economic depression, the revanchist ambitions of the German leadership and the discontent in Germany with the results of the First World War, ended with Hit-

ler's fascist regime coming to power and unleashing the Second World War.

Again, the growth of state nationalism in Europe reached its apogee, with the formation of East European states in an atmosphere of mutual mistrust which did not allow for the creation of a European system of collective security against Germany in the 1930s.

Hence, many historians are perfectly justified in calling the period from 1918 to 1945 a single world war. In its cruellest form, history showed the whole destructive force of the mechanism of nationalism to Europeans.

The conclusion of the Second World War set Europe on the road towards regional cooperation. At first, Europe created a coal and steel union in 1951, as Germany had the iron ore and France the coal necessary for steel manufacture. This union laid the basis for the Common Market. In 1957 France, Germany, Belgium, Holland, Italy and Luxembourg signed the Rome Treaty and founded the European Economic Union.

This integration defeated nationalism in Europe by means of the creation of a European state bureaucracy – clever, highly educated people with a personal interest in the integration of the European population along religious, economic and political lines.

However, the destructive mechanism of nationalism had already infiltrated the international system and the former European colonies applied it to their own state systems. The self-destructive force of nationalism consists of this, that all states and peoples are directed, in a manner of speaking, by their instincts for self-preservation. These appear to be the national interests of the state. But their realisation must take into consideration the precepts and laws established by the international community.

A young state, proclaiming national independence, declares its national interests. But here clashes may occur, as the

development of new states broadens the scale of their national interests, which greatly increases the complexity of procedures for their agreement. If a country's leadership lacks the political will to create practical working systems of mutual cooperation, conflicts with the national interests of other states will inevitably arise. These take the most diverse forms and include military hostilities.

The third lesson of history may be learned from the recent history of the countries of the Arab world. Historical practice graphically demonstrates that the lack of a common political, military and cultural strategy and corresponding tactics for countries which have common regional interests, leads in the end to the loss of potential for realising the national and state interests of each separate country.

After 1948 the former Middle Eastern mandates of Britain and France proclaimed independence one after the other. But within ten years every independent Arab state had entered into conflict with at least one of its neighbours. The Near East continues to be the biggest flashpoint on the planet. The military-economic threat of the Islamic world is a myth exploited by certain interested parties. An Islamic threat does not exist because Arab countries, like all other countries with Islamic populations, are divided by national interests.

The fragmentation of the Arab world was advantageous to some interested parties, and it remains so. First, it facilitates the influence of those powers in the region which play on conflicts between Arabs; second, it does not allow Arab countries to conduct any form of unified economic policies, which would include those based around oil. I think that this lesson of history must be absorbed by the young states of Central Asia.

* * *

By taking into account the aforementioned lessons of history, the countries of Central Asia have the potential to form a powerful and independent region, since, for the first time in 500 years, our region is becoming important to the world economy.

At the end of the fifteenth century Central Asia was a vital region in the world economy. Our region occupied a strategic position linking East and West. However, following the fragmentation of the Mongol empire into small states, and then the fall of the Golden Horde, transportation of goods along the Silk Road became expensive, unsafe and unpopular. By this time Europeans were using ships and the Eurasian transit countries weakened and markedly declined in prosperity. With the withering of the Silk Road, Central Asia became a peripheral area. The consolidated military strength and the united control of the transit trade consisted of the Turkic forces that controlled a large territory within the Eurasian continent and particularly its transport arteries. The Turkic peoples fought, not in order to subjugate the settled peoples, but to force them to trade with the Turks and to grant them free access to the sea.

With late-twentieth-century independence the situation in Central Asia is changing. Now, in addition to the fact that Central Asia is strengthening its transit potential, the region itself is becoming a supplier of goods that are valuable in the world market – oil and gas, ore and agricultural produce. In the twenty-first century oil and gas pipelines will be laid along the ancient Silk routes transporting Central Asian oil and gas to both the East and the West.

However, for the development of transit trade, as with the export of oil and gas, it is profitable and necessary for the peoples of Central Asia, as in ancient times, to have a unified external economic policy, a single customs region, taxation system and

security. In order to prevent Central Asia from becoming a province to be plundered for raw materials, we have time on our side. For example, the period from 2000 to 2020 will be characterised by the relatively peaceful military-political influence of world powers in Central Asia.

In this new geo-economic situation the countries of Central Asia can defend their independence only through mutual cooperation and support. Central Asiatic integration is the region's path towards military, political and economic independence in the world arena. It is the only way for our region to gain the respect of the entire world.

In the twenty-first century geo-politics will gradually be replaced by geo-economics. In other words, economic interests will dictate military and political interests. On the global level the creation of economic blocs that rest on military-political means of defence threatens: a) the principle of free trade; b) to create a multi-polar world system. Taken together these may lead to a new division of the world into spheres of influence and new global conflicts.

It is important to note that the first half of the twenty-first century will be marked by rivalry between the great powers for domination within the Asian Pacific region. And in our interests and those of the states of Central Asia, it is important to take the correct position in relation to this phenomenon within global geo-economics.

In my view, the development of a common strategy for the countries of Central Asia must take into detailed account the reasons for the former success of the "Asian tigers", as well as all the errors of the Arab countries which led to the fragmentation of the Arab world, rendering it incapable of conducting united and coordinated politics that serve the common interest.

Besides this, we must take into account the fact that the Soviet legacy remains in the Central Asian countries as a whole tan-

gle of economic, ethnic and other problems, to which are now added several conflicting short-term national interests.

It is time to devise a raft of measures that will prevent conflict between the Central Asian countries. The conclusion of a Treaty for lasting peace between Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan would be a good basis. We must work on its practical implementation. For Central Asian integration and a future rapprochement between our countries, as peoples with a common history, culture, language and faith, the relations between Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, and the Kazakh, Uzbek and Kyrgyz peoples are of central significance.

Today, as leaders of the Central Asian countries, we need to understand and agree with the thesis that any aggressive attempt to form a national state on a narrow understanding of national interests, without taking into account overall regional interests, will destroy the strategic balance of Central Asia. In relation to this, Kazakh, Uzbek and Kyrgyz politicians must base the implementation of national strategies on mutual responsibility for the results of the implemented plans to be based on mutual respect for the national interests of every Central Asian country. Only in this instance will we be worthy of our great common ancestors.

For the integration of our region we have more favourable preconditions than the European countries had in their time. To this we can ascribe several factors that we have in common – external threats; cultural and historical roots; religion; ecological problems. Besides which, the Soviet Union has bequeathed us common economic, financial, educational and ecological standards. The architects of the European Union could only dream of such preconditions for integration.

As far as the economic sphere is concerned, we need to do the following: strengthen the activities of the unified economic zone; augment the role and status of the Central Asian development bank; create a multilateral Customs union; create a

common agricultural market; create a single foreign economic policy; create a common transport system; create and strengthen transnational companies in the three countries; create a Common Market; and, finally, in the future, create a single currency system.



THE RINGS OF
HISTORY AND
THE NATIONAL
MEMORY

*The past does not lie elsewhere,
in its own time,
but here, in me.
The past – it is I,
it is my life*

J Ortega y Gasset

If we want to be a state and build a long-lasting statehood then it is important to understand the sources of the spirituality of the people. Let us examine one of the possible directions for this search.

This approach is based in the people's wisdom. The Kazakhs have a saying: "*Zheti atasyn bilmeitin er zhetesiz, zheti gasyr tarikhyn bilmeitin el zhetesiz.*" "The son who is ignorant of his seven forefathers is muddle-headed; a people who are ignorant of their past seven centuries are without a leader or a future."

However, we must not limit ourselves to seven centuries, for invisible threads connect our history logically and geographically with many other names and peoples, which to one degree or another have left their traces in the genetic memory of the many modern cultures of the Eurasian "heartland", including in the cultural code of the Kazakhs.

Let us take the development of spirituality on our territory over the course of six thousand years. For the purpose of analysis this may be divided into the following stages:

The first stage. The occupation of the entire territory of modern Kazakhstan by innumerable tribes of ancient Aryan pastoralists. The ancient priests successfully organised the lives of their families, clans, tribes and leaders on the basis of the sacred laws of their people. The temple complexes of Sintasht and Arkaim in the Southern Urals are material evidence of the soul of the people at this time.

The second stage. Around four to five thousand years ago the centre of the history and spirit of the Aryans gradually shifted from north to south, from the Southern Urals to the Indus valley. Their epic tales were written in the form of the Vedas, and in south-west Iran in the form of the Avesta. The spiritual life of the peoples who were left behind slowly went into decline. On

the territory of modern Kazakhstan Tamgaly is perhaps the only sanctuary of the time. But the later the ancient Aryan soul on our territory was embodied in the *kurgans* of Issyk and Beshaty, the Saka rulers.

The third stage. Three to four thousand years ago. In the East and on the Gobi steppes a powerful wave of proto-Huns appeared. Two and a half to two thousand years ago they gradually moved to our territory. On top of the ancient layers of Vedic spiritual knowledge a young new wave accumulated – the Tengri faith of the Huns, which took the form of a trinity: *Tengri* – the Heavens, *Zher-Su* – Earth-Water, *Umai* – the Eternal Mother.

The faith of the Hun priests gradually penetrated the daily life of the descendants of the Saka-Sarmatian tribes. The spirit of the incoming Hun peoples intermingled with the spirit of the ancient Aryans in the melting pots of the first two Hun empires.

The fourth stage. One and a half thousand years ago the Turks emerged as descendants of the Huns. The Turkic family of Ashina was the children of the ancient priestly dynasty of the tribes of Hundi from the Ardos plateau. They brought a new stream of spiritual life to the local inhabitants. The first Turkic kaganate formed on the wave of this new spiritual surge – the Great El. This third empire united all local Saka tribes with the Turkic tribes from Baikal to the Caspian, who in the course of the previous millennium had dispersed beneath the influence of the indomitable spirit of the Huns.

The virtual layer cake that was the Great El may be broadly divided into at least three strata.

In the northern part were mostly peoples of the union of the Kypchak tribes.

In the south were Toguz or Oguz tribes.

In the centre, between these two layers, the Turkic family of Ashina strengthened the links in the chain.

An epic tale of the southern layer, the Oguz, was expressed in the *Tales of Grandfather Korkyt*. He created the *kobyz*¹⁸ which to this day reproduces the sacred resonance of the spirit of the people of those times.

The central layer expressed itself in the partial preservation of the genealogical legends of the Turkic family lineage of Ashina – the young Turkic prince and the wolverine. Look at the stele with the Urdu inscription of *Izbugut* in Mongolia – it is a stone canvas of the Turkic spirit, imprinted for centuries in the souls of the descendants of the ancient Turks. These legends have been preserved in the Chinese memoirs of Jao-Shi and Daishi.

The spiritual canvas of the northern ethnic layer of the future Kazakh people – the Kypchaks – is preserved in writings of a somewhat later period. First of all the Codex Cumanicus – a memoir written in the Kypchak language of the thirteenth century expresses a brilliant form of Kypchak folklore: puzzles, aphorisms, shepherds' songs and all the works of Kypchak heroic epics.

These three branches or parts of the single Turkic epic tale, as it were, formed three rings of Turkic spirituality within Kazakhstan and left their traces in the cultural and historical archetypes of the modern Turkic peoples, which include the Kazakhs.

The Turkic-Oguz faith was a unified dogma resting on a powerful genealogical history, on steppe historiography and genealogy. It gave birth to tribal leaders as a family of descendants of the Heavenly father. It was a new steppe ideology and virtually a new religion.

The fifth stage. Thirteen hundred to eleven hundred years ago the spiritual centre of the Turkic people pulsed in the East, on the Orkhon-Yenisei. Runic inscriptions of Tonyukuk and Kul Tegin on the Orkhon Yenisei stone stelae are relics of the state of the

¹⁸ The kobyz is an ancient Kazakh stringed instrument.

ancient Kyrgyz. The tenth-century epic tale of *Manas* is a natural continuation of this impulse of the Turkic national spirit.

This spiritual artefact of the highest quality was created by the proto-Kyrgyz (more than anyone else, the modern Kyrgyz people may claim these artefacts as their own). It elevated the spirituality of the proto-Kazakhs, and other ancestors of the modern Turkic peoples. Later, a single united body of the Turkic people arose, which was penetrated by the light that emanated from this mighty spiritual peak.

The sixth stage. Eleven hundred to nine hundred years ago a powerful wave of the Arab-Islamic spirit began to roll across the south-western territory of Kazakhstan. It took time to reach the depths of the people's soul; however, its influence was substantial. The national elite did not only accept Islam, they changed their language. The runic writings of the early Turks were washed away by the incoming Arab influences. The new spiritual wave from the south-west manifested itself in the works of the cultural-political elite.

The three spiritual stars of the first magnitude of that era were al-Farabi from Syr Darya, Yosuf Balsaguni from Semirechie and Mahmood Kashgari.

In Central Asia Al-Farabi played the role of a Turkic Plato. The *Kutadgu Bilig* (Beneficial Knowledge) of Yusuf Balasaguni is the first sacred writings of the Turkic-speaking peoples of Kazakhstan and Central Asia to reach us. The eleventh century dictionary of Turkic dialects *Divan-lugat-at-Turk* of Mahmood Kashgari is the first Turkic encyclopaedia.

The seventh stage. The eleventh century is dominated by a powerful spiritual light from Turkestan¹⁹. The first Turkic Sufi Hodja Ahmet Yassau was born in 1093. He laid the foundations of Islamic mysticism, Sufism, in his everyday version for the people,

¹⁹ Turkestan is a region in southern Kazakhstan.

which quite quickly reached the north and east of Kazakhstan. Hodzha Akhmet Yassauï created a national spiritual system for all the Turkic peoples of Central Asia including Kazakhstan.

The name of Yassauï is linked to not only the beginnings of Islamisation among the Turkic peoples, but also to the process of the mutual influence of Tengrism (shamanism) and Islamic culture. The specific Islamic culture of mediaeval Kazakhstan had little in common with the dogmas of prescriptive Islam.

The Sufism of Yassauï imbued every level of the mentality of Turkic-speaking society at that time.

Sufism preserved the most significant elements of Tengrism as symbols, made up of the life and practical philosophy of the Turks. It was through the works of Yassauï that Islam became the spiritual path which the Kazakhs have followed for the past eight centuries. It lay at the source of the formation of the Kazakh khanate and the Kazakh people.

Divan-i-khikmet ("The Book of Wisdom") of Hodzha Akhmet Yassauï would undoubtedly be one of the components of the spiritual history of the Kazakhs, were such a history to be written. The Otrar mausoleum of Arystan Baba, the teacher of Yassauï, and that of Hodji Ahmet Yassauï himself in Turkestan are extremely important centres of national spirituality of the Kazakhs. The mausoleum of Yassauï became a symbol of Kazakh statehood; in later times it fulfilled the role of a national pantheon in which the ashes of the great representatives of the Kazakh people were preserved. The construction of this splendid memorial directed the nation's attention towards to a unifying centre.

The eighth stage. The twelfth to the fourteenth centuries were the beginning of the first great drama of our Kazakh ancestors – the invasion of Genghis Khan. It was a mighty destructive wave, the first colonisation of the Kazakh people, which powerfully deformed their historic body, their spirit and in many ways slowed their natural development into a united Kazakh people.

The beginning of this period is marked by the appearance of the legendary Maiki bi. According to legend, he was the ancestral father of the body of *beys* in our history.

Having begun the unification of all Kazakhs into one nation, Maiki bi became the founder of the legendary genealogy of the Kazakhs, in which the pre-Islamic and Islamic faiths were naturally interwoven.

Legend says that it was Maiki who carved *nur tamgasy* – “illuminating print” – onto stone. This was the main *tamga* of all three Kazakh *zhuz*. The banner is the symbol of all *uisuns*: *Koz* or “eye” is the symbol of the Agryns; *naiza* or “spear” is the symbol of the Alshins.

It is interesting that precisely at that time the four basic ideals of the Kazakh people were formed. They were expressed by war cries – the *urans* – of the three *zhuz*: *Baktiyar* or “happiness” of the Old *zhuz*, *Ak zhol* or “justice” of the Middle *zhuz* and Alshyn, *Ot-ana* of the Young *zhuz*. All these three *zhuz urans* were united into one *uran* for all the Kazakhs as a single people – Alash.

In this period the people fell into the shackles of the fourth empire, that of Genghis Khan and his descendants. The spirituality of the people fell under the influence of one of the most powerful imperial ideologies and dogmas of that time, the cult of Genghis Khan. Essentially, this cult was a new religion that was not fully understood. But it was not only an ideology of physical strength and crude willpower, but also a revolution in spirit, giving meaning and support to the construction of the great empire of Genghis and his descendants.

The Oguz beliefs of the steppe-dwellers that had prevailed until that time, the *urans* (of the *zhuz* and the general Alash), and their genealogy were historically mixed into the new genealogy and partially erased from the memory of the people.

From then on, the two foreign estates of the white bones (*ak suiek*) – *tore* and *kozha* – were placed above the tribal elites

of the Turks, who were deprived of their political and spiritual power. The *tore* were the descendants of Genghis Khan and the *kozha* embodied the spiritual power of the direct descendants of Muhammad and the prophets. With the passage of time the members of these estates became assimilated with the local population, adopting their customs, traditions and mental qualities, which flowed into the common spirituality of the Kazakh people.

The written relics of the Mongol Buddhist empire of Genghis Khan, such as the "Secret tales or Secret History of the Mongols" and *Yassa*, the legal code of Genghis Khan, reveal the spirit of the Mongols and must be included in the spiritual history of the Kazakhs. The cult of Genghis Khan, as a part of the history of the people over the course of centuries, earned not only hatred but also popularity among the simple people. And this must never be overlooked.

The ninth stage. The fifteenth to seventeenth centuries. From the time of the formation of the first Kazakh khanate around 1466 the foundation was laid for the natural development of the common spirituality of all the people. And this is true even under the conditions of the formal rule of the *tore* and *kozha* over the local national elite.

First, the spirit of the people blazed in the hearts of its poets, composers and storytellers. The creations of the spiritual leaders of the nation of this period such as Asan Kaigy, Shalkiiz Zhirau, and Bukhar Zhirau formed and developed the true Kazakh spirituality. Such works as the epic tales of that time, *Koblandy batyr*, *Kambar batyr*, and the poems *Kozy-Korpeshe*, *Bayan-Sulu*, *Kyz-Zhibek* and others lie at the very foundation of the Kazakh national spirit.

Second, at that time, after the khans Khanybek and Girei left Semirechie the spirit of the people began to express itself openly and pronounce its own historical name – Kazakh. And with the

strengthening of this khanate from the second half of the fifteenth century all of its subjects were known as Kazakhs, both within the country and among their neighbours.

And third, in the same historical period the warrior spirit of the people expressed itself in a significant volitional act. In the first half of the seventeenth century three great *beys* of the three *zhuz* – Tole Bi, Kazybek Bi and Aiteke Bi, together with the Khan Tauke created a historical document *Zheti Zhargy* – seven truths, seven precepts – the codex of Kazakh common law.

Towards the end of this stage the Kazakh khanate fragmented into several independent quasi-states. This happened as a result of a breakdown of the spiritual and physical strength of the Kazakh people as a whole.

This fracture slowed down the development of the people and over two to three centuries naturally led it to the brink of disaster. This was quickly exploited by colonial powers, of which there were quite a few surrounding our territory.

The 250-year-long invasions of the Djungars began. They were practically the same people as us. But the force of historical circumstance pitted the two peoples against each other and a fratricidal war began. Again, thanks to the might of the great Tole Bi, Kazybek Bi and Aiteke Bi, the people united to repulse the invaders at the decisive battle by the Bolant river. In Anrakai in 1729 a historic battle took place which decided the fate of the Kazakh nation. To this day we have not given this event its full due. Our children, and we ourselves, know little about this heroic period of our people, the shining historical moment when the soul of the Kazakh people took wing.

The tenth stage – the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. In this period the strength of the military spirit of the Kazakh people suffered a heavy blow.

As I said earlier, this was the war with the Djungars, which took place on our territory. The years of the great calamity

(1723-7) were a test for the survival of the Kazakh people. Into the ranks of the defenders of the nation poured such dazzling examples of the national warrior spirit as Begenbai Batyr, Kabanbai Batyr, Hauryzbai Batyr and a host of others.

The united popular will was embodied in Khan Abylai. The triumph of Abylai, together with the *batyrs*, was to unify the people and perform heroic marvels which contributed to the rapid rebirth of the Kazakh spirit in that cruel century.

At the same time the spiritual leaders of the nation, Tole Bi, Kazybek Bi and Aiteke Bi, continued to undertake more peaceful spiritual tasks. Together with Khan Abylai they worked towards bringing the nation together, in the face of external and internal strife.

Regardless of all obstacles, all the while the spirit of the people carried out its invisible, tireless and painstaking work, reflected in the ritual ceremonies of births and deaths, national songs and dances, festivities, and the sorrows and joys of simple Kazakhs in everyday life. The people passed on the spiritual baton from one generation to the next in the preservation of the traditional arts of agriculture and animal husbandry, and the secrets of folk methods of healing which were practised by the shamans (*baksy*) of the steppe.

I have to say here that the history of every region and every *aul* needs to be recorded, the dwelling places, the rivers and hills, and the customs associated with these. What is said when a newborn child is blessed? What is said at weddings? What is said at funerals? Which historical legends are linked to each settlement? Why do they carry their particular names and not any other?

All this constitutes our historical memory. It is the culture of the people, which will never disappear as long as we record it.

And so, in the middle of the nineteenth century, these new, unfamiliar moments ripened in the life of the national spirit. For the Kazakhs, peaceful daily spiritual growth alternated with the

need to take up arms in defence of their identity, their understanding and national picture of the world. To a large degree this had a political rather than a spiritual basis. Uprisings such as that led by Syrym Datov and Kenesar Kasymov were attempts to achieve the self-determination of the Kazakh national spirit, linking the forces of all Kazakhs in the battle against a common enemy – the Russian empire.

The Kazakh people fell into the embrace of the fifth empire, the Russian. Again this was due to discord, lack of unity and the division of Kazakh territory into small khanates. Attempts at opposition were futile and doomed to defeat, since the potential to repel foreign invasion, to oppose foreign enemies, is based on internal strength and not the other way round.

Precisely because of this, Abai in his *Exhortations*, (*Karasöz*), proposed to the Kazakhs that if they wanted to change their world they would have to start with themselves.

At the end of this stage, as the soul of the nation tried to express itself in creativity and not in destruction, two bright stars emerged – Chokan Valikhanov and Abai. A direct descendant of Khan Abylai, Chokan Valikhanov carried the rich spiritual energy of his ancestors. This, which he felt so deeply, is evidenced by his short but spiritually fulfilled life. Above all he explored the ancient and very deep roots of the Kazakh soul – Zoroastrianism, shamanism and Islam. He was the first to discover the deeply Zoroastrian nature of Kazakh shamanism.

It is hard to exaggerate the complexity and drama of the contradictory process of the development of Kazakh spirituality during the period of Russian colonisation.

Kazakh spirituality found itself in a situation of constant conflict between its deepest values and those of the metropolis. The Kazakh people were subjugated to the logic of a foreign social and cultural-civilisational complex.

The conflict of values of two cultures is a conflict of different thought systems, different outlooks and different "logics".

Therefore, interaction between civilisations initially has to cross an abyss of incomprehension. A prolonged period of wars and armed uprisings, of breaking away and isolationism, and, finally, a deep hostility and powerless resentment seems a perfectly natural phenomenon.

Then a period begins when the separate peoples see a future, a sum of their inevitable requirements.

But along with this they understand that in making compromises, they need to choose a path that will not allow them to lose the most important thing – the identity of the people, the inner values which have formed over centuries.

And people have to be found who have the strength of genius to foresee the direction that history will take. Two cultures will be united through their creativity. Their creativity is not a subjective drama or emotion in the consciousness of a separate individual, but is a historical moment in the interchange of cultures and civilisations before the time when it will occur on a larger scale in real life.

It is these individuals who give birth to a new logic of mutual understanding and not the confrontation of two schools of thought and world values. In their titanic creative breakthroughs they formulate new and higher metaphors, thoughts and values.

The Kazakh national picture of the world at that time differed substantially from that of the surrounding Europeans (who at that time were represented by Russian culture), and also of the Eastern nations (Turkic-Islamic culture – the Central Asian khanates). The surrounding nomadic world no longer existed. Only the Kazakhs remained as the last nomadic civilisation on this great continent, on the expanses of Eurasia. And under the

conditions of colonisation this deteriorated more rapidly than at any other time in its long history.

The geniuses begin their sacred work as criticism of those basic national attitudes which slowed and hampered the movement of the people towards the future. Abai understood very well that Kazakh spirituality could not develop in its previous forms. Earlier it had been based on a self-reflection that harked back to the past; Abai turned the problem on its head by examining the place of the Kazakh people in the flow of history yet to come.

Because he started as a poet, he applied himself to the fundamental reform of the Kazakh artistic world, which was the basis of the entire Kazakh spiritual world. But he understood that the artistic world has its limits, despite occupying an exclusive place in the self-consciousness of the Kazakhs. So he moved beyond the boundaries of his own poetic creativity.

Abai became the thinker of his people. The arduous search for the place of the Kazakh people in world culture, its future among the peoples of the human race, led Abai to discover a series of fundamental reasons why Kazakh society was lagging behind the exigencies of the times.

In his works he turned to thinkers both of the East and the West. And here the scale of his vision of the history of those times began to tell.

The soul of this tormented genius was great enough for the whole people. And from that time, as long as the Kazakhs exist on this earth, they will constantly sense the spiritual emanations of this great man.

One must appreciate the fact that Kazakh culture, which came from an original and founding branch of Eastern civilisation, did not lose the roots of its identity, despite being pulled into the orbit of the Russian empire and its cultural-civilisational influences.

This constructive beginning of the people's spirit is reflected in the work of Kurmangaz, Dauletkere, the singer Birzhan and the people's poetess Sara. Ibrai Altynsarin was another brilliant reflection of the popular spirit in another spiritual sphere. Altynsarin was the first apostle of popular education in Kazakhstan. Tens and hundreds of less well known but no less brilliant spiritual teachers, who reflected the spirit of the Kazakh people in their personal lives, await their researchers, who will acquaint large sections of Kazakh society with the work of their ancestors towards strengthening the Kazakh identity.

The eleventh step – the twentieth century. After the fall of the Kazakh khanate in the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries the restless spirit of the Kazakhs sought expression in the most diverse forms. The power of the *tore* and *kozha* was weakened, their place emptied and left unoccupied for the time being. The fifth empire – the Russian – collapsed and once again the Kazakhs faced the possibility of building their own state. The first such attempt was made in 1917 by the leaders of Alash-Orda, Alihan Bukeikhanov, Myrzhakyp Dulatov, Akhmet Baitursynov and others.

As if it had never happened, the good work of Alash-Orde ended tragically. Circumstances stifled this burning and impassioned outburst of young and educated representatives of the Kazakh national spirit.

And so from 1917 to 1920 the national spirit of the Kazakhs again fell under a heavy spiritual yoke. Kazakhstan became a part of the sixth empire – that of the USSR, which was not interested in the genuine self-direction of the Kazakh spirit and Kazakh people. It was a new dramatic turn and development in Kazakh spirituality. Physical repression alone destroyed almost half the nation.

The many centuries of deprivation of spiritual independence, internal clan breakdown, *zhuz* ambitions, lack of unity

of will among the people, and also the inability to surmount the division into three *zhuzy*, made it possible for the new power to inflict enormous damage on the unity of the nation.

To no small degree this was the price the nation had to pay for its lack of independence, lack of unity and the consequent loss of tempo in the development of the aforementioned stages. This ideological machine, unprecedented in the history of humanity, pulverised the spiritual basis of the nation for 70 years, standardising and unifying Kazakh spirituality.

The twelfth stage begins in the middle of the 1980s. It is marked by an upsurge of the national spirit. It is Zheltoksan in 1986, although this was more concerned with politics than with spirit. And today the nation stands at a crossroads. The sixth empire has fallen.

Nature abhors a vacuum. Shall we find ourselves in a seventh empire or continue with our independent development, fulfilling the centuries-old dream of our fathers, grandfathers and distant ancestors?

* * *

We have been talking about the iron tread of time on the Eurasian Steppe, about the unification of seven generations, about the different spiritual sources which accumulated on this territory in rings similar to those of a centuries-old tree.

I categorically disagree with the well-known expression that all that can be learned from history is that it does not teach anything. However, history certainly does not teach those who relate to her as to a collection of myths.

Speaking of the relics of history, I realise the need to pin down that hard to define "substance of history", which is called the national spirit.

* * *

It is only now that Kazakh self-awareness has the opportunity to understand its national identity in the past, present and future stream of history ... but this possibility must become a reality in the mass consciousness not only of Kazakhs but also of all citizens of Kazakhstan.

This task stands before us not just as a great opportunity, but as a burning necessity. In accomplishing it, we will take our rightful place in history, and not hang over the abyss of historical oblivion.

Nursultan A. NAZARBAYEV

IN THE STREAM OF HISTORY

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