

Between Soviet, Russian, and Kazakh: Multicultural Poetry of Olzhas Suleimenov.

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Contents

INTRODUCTION	3
HISTORICAL CONTEXT	4
BACKGROUND OF THE AUTHOR	7
ANALYSIS	10
BIBLIOGRAPHY	25
APPENDIX.....	28

INTRODUCTION

The collapse of the Soviet Union was a huge event for the entire world and subsequently became the trigger for the development of several independent states. One of such states is Kazakhstan, with its comprehensive language policy. Modern sociological works illustrate that “both Kazakh and Russian are strengthening”¹. When mentioning the language issue, it is impossible to note that “Kazakhstan is among the few countries in the post-Soviet space in which almost all inhabitants use the Russian language”². The first president of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev even “announced the existence of a ‘Kazakhstani nation’”³. Also, Kazakhstan “maintains close ties with the Russian Federation as its leading strategic partner”⁴. All these factors show that Kazakhstan is not a country that can easily switch to the rails of the ethnic state and is forced to adapt to the realities of the post-Soviet reality. And it gives rise to a huge number of questions. One of these is the question of the involvement of authors who gained wide popularity during the Soviet period in the Kazakh literary canon. An interesting case is Olzhas Suleimenov, the author of many poems and books, who wrote his entire career primarily in Russian but using Kazakh titles, words, and cultural concepts, even in his early works. He symbolized the peculiarity of the national policies of that period.

The modern realities of independent Kazakhstan call into question many aspects of the past. One of them is the importance of studying the literary works of the prominent Soviet

¹ Kosmarskaya, Natalya, and Igor Savin. “Between Emotions and Pragmatism: The Russian Language in Kazakhstan and the ‘Russian Factor.’” In “Politics of the Russian Language Beyond Russia”, edited by Christian Noack, *Edinburgh University Press* (2021): 68–91, p. 74.

² Kosmarskaya, Natalya, and Igor Savin. “Between Emotions and Pragmatism: The Russian Language in Kazakhstan and the ‘Russian Factor.’” In “Politics of the Russian Language Beyond Russia”, edited by Christian Noack, *Edinburgh University Press* (2021): 68–91, p. 73.

³ Abashin, Sergei. “Nation-Construction in Post-Soviet Central Asia.” Chapter. In “Soviet and Post-Soviet Identities”, edited by Mark Bassin and Catriona Kelly, Cambridge: *Cambridge University Press*, (2012): 150–68, p. 156.

⁴ Kosmarskaya, Natalya, and Igor Savin. “Between Emotions and Pragmatism: The Russian Language in Kazakhstan and the ‘Russian Factor.’” In “Politics of the Russian Language Beyond Russia”, edited by Christian Noack, *Edinburgh University Press* (2021): 68–91, p. 68.

Kazakh authors. My research work is devoted to the early poetic work of Olzhas Suleimenov, which is united by a common theme of the unification of several cultures. I selected several poems from the 60s for my further analysis, since this period of time is the period of the beginning of his creative career, which coincided with a period of as the "thaw". My main goal is to demonstrate the complexity of Soviet identity through the poetic works of Olzhas Suleimenov. I will consider the theme of Suleimenov's ethnic identity and how it is revealed through his verses. A very important aspect will be the mixing of several identities together and how Suleimenov rejected a radical national position in favor of keeping several identity features. As he wrote himself: "Two decades (from the 60s to the beginning of the 80s) will go down in our history as a period of rise of multinational Soviet literature"⁵. In my analysis, I already use this theoretical approach without using direct references and quotations. The importance of this work is a deeper understanding of the late Soviet historical period in literature and poetry of national authors. This period is a certain phenomenon in which for the first time a new Soviet identity emerged. It was different from the pre-Soviet and early Soviet periods. Suleimenov is one of the first authors who used the Russian language to tell about Kazakh identity in the Soviet context from his own perspective without strong pressure from the state.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Initially, the idea of supporting national republics was formed in Lenin's theory "of compensatory "nation-building" (natsional'noe stroitel'stvo) [...] attempt at a state-sponsored conflation of language, "culture," territory, and quota-fed bureaucracy"⁶. Stalin later added that mother tongue "can make possible 'a full development of the intellectual faculties of the Tatar or

⁵ Suleimenov, Olzhas. "Так было..." *Service press* (2023), p. 27.

⁶ Slezkine, Yuri. "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism." *Slavic Review* 53, no. 2 (1994): 414–52, p. 414.

of the Jewish worker”⁷. The importance of such theories and subsequent government decisions was to finally “classify all citizens according to their biological nationalities and formally prescribe preferential treatment of certain ethnically defined populations”⁸. In order to unite many ethnic groups under a common state idea, it was necessary to understand these ethnic groups and define them. This required studying their languages and cultures. Since “language was considered a key criterion in differentiating ethnic groups and reinforcing their collective consciousness”⁹.

As emphasized in Sergei Abashin’s article about the coloniality of the USSR, there are several periods when the state set the goal of “making a division between the pre-Soviet as colonial and the Soviet as anti-colonial”¹⁰. Abashin notes that the first such moment was the period from the 20s to the 30s, when it was necessary to build an initial course for the development of the country under a new ideology. And the second was the period of the 50s, which will be the main one specifically for my current research. This period was marked by the collapse of most of the empires and the beginning of attracting “new allies”¹¹ in the Cold War. And as some scholars say: “the USSR was promoting theatrical multiculturalism and other forms of affirmative action and advocated creolization instead of the racial/ethnic segregation (which was an important argument in its juxtaposition with the demonized West)”¹² But others also added that after all the new identity was created, which was officially based on the principles of

⁷ Slezkine, Yuri. “The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism.” *Slavic Review* 53, no. 2 (1994): 414–52, p. 418.

⁸ Slezkine, Yuri. “The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism.” *Slavic Review* 53, no. 2 (1994): 414–52, p. 415.

⁹ Ferrando, Olivier. “Policies and Practices of Language Education in Post-Soviet Central Asia: Between Ethnic Identity and Civic Consciousness.” Chapter. In “Soviet and Post-Soviet Identities”, edited by Mark Bassin and Catriona Kelly, Cambridge: *Cambridge University Press*, (2012): 254–77, p. 254.

¹⁰ Abashin, Sergey. “Советское=колониальное? (За и против) // Понятия о советском в Центральной Азии.” *Альманах Штаба № 2* (2016), p. 30

¹¹ Abashin, Sergey. “Советское=колониальное? (За и против) // Понятия о советском в Центральной Азии.” *Альманах Штаба № 2* (2016), p. 30

¹² Tlostanova, Madina. “The Postcolonial Condition, the Decolonial Option, and the Post-Socialist Intervention.” *Postcolonialism Cross-Examined* (June 19, 2019), p. 170.

“friendship of peoples”¹³. It was very important to create an image of a country in which there is conditional equality between all nations and ethnicities.

The formation of national policy in the early Soviet Union cannot be called a simple period, since it contains a huge list of nuances that are important and must be taken into account when analyzing the situation in Soviet Kazakhstan, and how it became what it was at the beginning of Olzhas Suleimenov's writing career. The Soviet Union was a young state reconsidering the idea of the colonialism of the Russian Empire, which could not help but affect the stable situation in all the republics that were part of the USSR. As Terry Martin wrote in his work "The Empire of Positive Action", in the Soviet Union, "literally tens of thousands of national borders were drawn"¹⁴. These actions could not help but affect the peace and stability in these regions. In such cases, it turned out that in some territories there were representatives of only two nationalities who decided who was a minority. Naturally, a situation occurs in which "a group representing a minority begins to acutely feel its minority status"¹⁵ (Martin, p. 105). Various attempts begin to seize the status of the majority, often through measures of expulsion or making life as difficult as possible for representatives of other nationalities.

Due to frequent conflicts and the concern of the Russian population not to lose their status as "masters" in front of the Kyrgyz (Kazakh) "natives [аборигенам]", numerous skirmishes and attacks occurred, in which many Kazakhs had to flee their lands¹⁶. However, there were also reverse cases, which essentially provoked government decisions on this issue. In the USSR of that period, the concept of "development" of nationalities was uniform and different

¹³ Vinogradov, Igor. “Жизнь и Смерть Советского Понятия ‘Дружба Народов.’” *Cahiers Du Monde Russe* 36, no. 4 (1995): 455–62, p. 456.

¹⁴ Martin, Terry. “The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939.” *Cornell University Press* (2001), p. 105.

¹⁵ Martin, Terry. “The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939.” *Cornell University Press* (2001), p. 105.

¹⁶ Martin, Terry. “The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939.” *Cornell University Press* (2001), p. 95.

nations were on different "segments of this single path"¹⁷ of common development. The policy of "indigenization" was actively pursued, which allowed non-Russian peoples to create and develop their "territories, languages, elites and cultures"¹⁸. The result of such a policy can be considered to be the division of peoples by the Soviet Union into Western nationalities, which often, according to the table of the level of literacy of the population, had high indicators of "development", while the Eastern nationalities were distinguished by extremely low indicators. What happened was that "the eastern republics successfully exploited the rhetoric of backwardness"¹⁹ in order to receive financial assistance from the center.

From this information it follows that the idea of national republics and the development of their languages, cultures and, accordingly, authors, was laid down even before the period of the "Thaw" and was the fundamental basis of the Soviet state. And from this it follows that Olzhas Suleimenov was, as a Kazakh author who wrote in Russian, but also the outcome of all the long-term practices in the development of a universal Soviet identity.

BACKGROUND OF THE AUTHOR

Suleimenov gained wide fame after the release of his work "Earth, Bow to Man!", which came out right after Yuri Gagarin's flight into space. He began to be invited to all sorts of performances, printed in newspapers, and talked about on radio and television²⁰. And the important point will be that he was subsequently included in the Soviet delegations to Europe and the United States. He read his work at "the Paris Sorbonne and Columbia University (New

¹⁷ Martin, Terry. "The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939." *Cornell University Press* (2001), p. 178.

¹⁸ Martin, Terry. "The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939." *Cornell University Press* (2001), p. 177.

¹⁹ Martin, Terry. "The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939." *Cornell University Press* (2001), p. 184.

²⁰ "Сулейменов Олжас." *Литературный Портал*, adebiportal.kz/ru/authors/view/101.

York)"²¹. These trips will be reflected in his poetry and will become significant moments in the construction of his own vision of the world.

After receiving the general historical context, the figure of Olzhas Suleimenov and his thoughts become a little clearer to us as readers. He, as a person of his generation in the future “finds a way to escape from the nationalistic prerogative that he blames for all the “narrow” perceptions in history writing”²². It had its own identity, which could not be limited to either the Kazakh or Russian framework, since the goal of the state at that time was to unite all nationalities under a single flag and without being tied only to Russian identity.

There is an opinion that Suleimenov had some "militant revolt" positions; however, if we look at his personality in more detail, it turns out that “his ultimate vision has been one of "synthesis" and "interdependence" between Slav and Turk”²³. Most likely his primary message was to “simultaneously legitimize the regime in the eyes of the two distinct socio-linguistic and socio-ethnic groups (Kazakh ethno-nationalists and Russian speakers), which were traditionally (from the Soviet period) presented as differentiated political audiences”²⁴. If we look at that period, the idea comes from the fact that the Soviet culture at that time provided an extraordinary “cultural incubator for intellectuals like him”²⁵. And this is an extremely important factor, since it subsequently leads to a better understanding of the vector of his further development as an author.

²¹ “Судейменов Олжас.” *Литературный Портал*, adebiportal.kz/ru/authors/view/101.

²² Kudaibergenova, Diana T. “‘Imagining Community’ in Soviet Kazakhstan. An Historical Analysis of Narrative on Nationalism in Kazakh-Soviet Literature.” *Nationalities Papers* 41, no. 5 (2013), p. 150.

²³ Ram, Harsha. “Imagining Eurasia: The Poetics and Ideology of Olzhas Suleimenov’s AZ i IA.” *Slavic Review* 60, no. 2 (2001): 289–311

²⁴ Kudaibergenova, Diana T. “The Ideology of Development and Legitimation: Beyond ‘Kazakhstan 2030.’” *Central Asian Survey* 34 (4) (2015), p. 440.

²⁵ Laruelle, Marlene. “Ideology of the ‘Crossroads’: Eurasianism from Suleimenov to Nazarbayev.” In “Central Peripheries: Nationhood in Central Asia.” *UCL Press* (2021), p. 140.

He even stated that "without the historical knowledge of our people, the history of the world is not complete"²⁶. According to him, "[he] was acutely jealous of those [people] who did not need to concern or care about the foundation of their "I"²⁷. For him, the priority was that the history of his national identity be preserved and integrated into the general history of the world. In the poetry that I will analyze in this work, this concept will often be encountered, in which the main idea is to demonstrate Kazakhstan and Asia to the world. He tries to explain Kazakh words, cultural phenomena, history through his poetic works.

²⁶ Kudaibergenova, Diana T. "Rewriting the Nation in Modern Kazakh Literature: Elites and Narratives." *Lexington Books*, (2017), p. 161.

²⁷ Kudaibergenova, Diana T. "Rewriting the Nation in Modern Kazakh Literature: Elites and Narratives." *Lexington Books*, (2017), p. 161.

Before I begin to analyze this verse, it is worth paying attention to its title. In his autobiography, Olzhas Suleimenov mentions Shoqan Walikhanov as a person whose historical works he greatly admired and even used him as a hero who “passed the baton to him”²⁸. One of the historical traditions that Shoqan passed on to future generations is the term “Ainalayin”²⁹.

This verse is profound work both in terms of content and reading variability. Under the veneer of obvious references to his biography and how he traveled “around Africas, Frances, Asias”³⁰ he adds ideological-figurative, stylistic and phonic levels of perception. In addition to the problem of the internal conflict of identity hidden between the lines, a two-layer narrative appears, which leads to the looping of the verse itself with the beginning and ending idea of the word “ainalayin”. This word appears as the main line that leads the story in all layers of perception, while uniting them into a common concept. To understand this in more detail, I will break this poem down into several layers and demonstrate how they are connected.

Initially, it would be necessary to start with the basic images, motives, emotions, ideas, from which one could subsequently build on to more complex ones. The lyrical hero appears as a man, apparently of Kazakh origin, who travels “around Africas, Frances, Asias” and performs with “dastans” which are a lyrical-epic genre of the Turkic countries. This hero imagines himself as the “last of the Horde”, referring to the Golden Horde heritage. And immediately adds to the line “to the last sea”, which in some variations was the Mediterranean Sea or possibly the Atlantic Ocean, signifying the conquest of the whole Eurasian continent. However, there are no exact references to the concept of "the last sea" in historical sources. There is a popular literary work by Vasily Yan, "To the 'Last Sea'", which is the first to use this term for a wide audience, just at the time when Olzhas Suleimenov had not yet begun his writing career. In this book, the

²⁸ Suleimenov, Olzhas. “Так было...” *Service press* (2023), p. 14

²⁹ Walikhanov, Shoqan. “Избранные произведения.” *Издательство Наука* (1986), p. 229.

³⁰ Suleimenov, Olzhas. “Так было...” *Service press* (2023), p. 24.

last sea is described as a narrow sea behind which the city of Rum (Rome) is hidden³¹. This demonstrates the conflict between the West and the East with these images of lyrical heroes who oppose themselves to the West. Both characters are interested in changing the perception of East by their conquests. And the line “they buried us with our feet to the West” sums up the seriousness of this conflict and with the ending “Today I understand you” the hero concludes that these conflicts are like “illnesses”. Here language “plays the role of one of the main symbols of the nation, its ‘soul’ and core value”³².

We could also look at this work from the perspective of different identities and the line “I wander through this black-and-white world” clearly combines Kazakh and Soviet identities, since the word “wander” refers us to the nomadic culture of the Kazakh steppes, while “black-and-white world” refers us to Suleimenov's biography, where he visited different countries as a Soviet delegate, including Europe³³. And the division of the world into black and white may be a reference to the bipolarity of the world at that time, with opposing communist and capitalist blocks of USSR and the West, respectively. This line can also be understood in terms of the racial variability of the world the hero roams. Further lines like “Roam around Africas, Frances, Asias” or “In Aleppo, I open the Arabs’ eyes,” or “In New York, I perform with dastans,” can partially confirm this version.

Now we can try to see more details that will lead to greater depth of the text. An obvious example would be the parallel narrative of the hero as a modern man who goes west with his “dastans” and the hero as the last representative of the Horde who takes a “spear” and goes west. There is a very important detail here that can only be understood in the original and this is the word “spear” [копье, копьѣ]. This word can refer to the spear as a weapon, but also as money

³¹ Yan, Vasily. “К ‘Последнему Морю’. (Путь Батѣя): Ист. повесть (XIII в.)” *М. : Гослитиздат* (1955) p. 94.

³² Abashin, Sergei. “Nation-Construction in Post-Soviet Central Asia.” Chapter. In “Soviet and Post-Soviet Identities”, edited by Mark Bassin and Catriona Kelly, Cambridge: *Cambridge University Press*, (2012): 150–68, p. 157.

³³ Suleimenov, Olzhas. “Так было...” *Service press* (2023), p. 24.

[копейка]. As a result, we have two parallel narratives with heroes from two times who conquer the West. One does it with the help of dastans, which he finds at home when he has no money and with which he goes to the West, and the other does it when the spear “finds its place” and goes to the West. One can also notice the contrast between the nomadic nature of the hero and the people who “advise” him to settle down and “to build a two-story house”. This brings us to the literal translation of the word “ainalayin”, which means “I circle around you”. Before analyzing this aspect of the work, a very important question must be determined.

It is quite notable that Suleimenov’s verse does not begin with the line “I wander through this black-and-white world”, as a reader might think from the first glance, not paying attention to the translation of the word “ainalayin” at the beginning. This translation part could be considered simply a paratext (material related to but distinct from the main body of a book) to the main part, if Suleimenov had not decided to add it at the very beginning, forcing the reader to understand that the translation of this word is conceptually significant for the overall picture of the work. In all editions of Suleimenov's books, the translation of the word “ainalayin” always comes before the first line of the work itself, although in other poems of the same editions, the translations of other words come after the verse, which makes it clear to us as readers that this is no longer just a paratext, but rather an unobvious beginning of the verse itself. Whether this translation is a paratext or not may not seem like such an important aspect if we look at Suleimenov's work from the point of view of an ordinary reader. However, in a conceptual sense, it is of great importance, because if this translation is part of the text itself, then this means that the text of this translation was not written by just an editor or anyone else, but by the author himself.

Now we can understand that this was not just a translation of the word “ainalayin”, but a work on a stylistic level, when the author gives two options for perceiving this "translation". The reader may perceive it as simply a translation or may perceive it as the initial foundation on which the entire concept is built and through which it extends. Returning to the question posed

earlier about literal translation as “I circle around you”, we can say that the entire narrative comes down to this concept. When the hero says that he “Roam around Africas, Frances, Asias” as the modern man and when the hero mentions “Straits, savannas, and mountains” as the last of the Horde, we could see that what they are actually doing is circling around the world. Then the author makes an interesting point with repetition when he adds two identical lines, “they buried us—with feet facing west,” which again creates a loop that makes a circle in a stylistic sense. In this cycle the author uses the idea that Asia is west of the West and that the West is east of the China Sea, which again creates a circle. A circle within a circle. And the very last circle will be a circle that could be overlooked if the reader had not paid attention to the text of the translation at the beginning of the verse. Below I will give a line from the initial “translation” and next to it a line from the end.

And when the author gives us the literal translation “I circle around you”, by “you” he means the world. Comparing them in context, one can understand that they mean literally the same thing, which brings us to the last circle of this verse. It seems like there are “many forms that metaphor takes in mediating postcoloniality: as contact point between one culture and another; as connective tissue of postcolonial memory; as agent of cultural reproduction; as conduit between the postcolonial subject and its origins or endings”³⁴

³⁴ Ramazani, Jahan, and A. K. Ramanujan. “Metaphor and Postcoloniality: The Poetry of A. K. Ramanujan.” *Contemporary Literature* 39, no. 1 (1998)

ДОМБРА

Я за домброй к знакомым не пойду,
и домбр нет, знакомые повывелись.
Я тульское, двухствольное найду,
из гаража во двор «Победу» выведу
и покачу по тракту в Кзылкум,
там - все. Пустыня - это тот же ГУМ,
там есть и музыкальные отделы,
бараны бродят, вол,
спилю под корень саксаульный ствол,
и выдолблю, и под орех отделаю.
Домбра прославит бедную страну, спарю
я жилы ворона и лебедя на саксаулине и
так рвану, -
что контрабасы застыдятся лепета и
скрипка вспыхнет - как она грубит!..
И вспомнит ствол пустынные закаты, и
ворон о буране затрубит, и лебедь по
лебедушке закаркает.
Я пальцами играю на хрящах.
Домбра, как черный лебедь, шеей
тянется,
крылами бьет! Пинается! -
Кричать!..
Как бедуинка над кострами в танце.
Сгорай, домбра!
Но вы опять правы,
они, увы, прочней - бараньи жилы...

1964

DOMBRA (Translation)

I won't go to my friends for a dombra,
and there are no dombras, my friends have
vanished.
I'll find a Tula double-barrel,
pull the "Pobeda" from the garage to the
yard,
and drive down the track to Kzylykum,
where there's everything. The desert - it's
like GUM,
it has musical departments,
rams wander there, and oxen,
I'll cut down a saxaul trunk at the root,
hollow it out, and finish it in walnut.

The dombra will glorify this poor country,
I'll join the sinews of a crow and a swan
on the saxaul neck, and strike such a
sound—
that double basses will blush at their
babbling,
and the violin will blaze, as it harshly
groans!

The trunk will remember the desert sunsets,
the crow will sound out the coming storm,
and the swan will croak the swan's own
song.

I play with my fingers on cartilage.
The dombra, like a black swan, stretches its
neck,
it beats its wings! It bucks! -
To scream!
Like a Bedouin woman dancing by the fires.
Burn, dombra!

But you are right again,
they, alas, are stronger - the rams' sinews...

1964

In this verse, Suleimenov undertook to write about one of the main symbols of Kazakh identity - the dombra. And he decided to approach this symbol with the context of the modern Soviet Kazakh reality, in which the image of the dombra appears to readers not in the best

condition. From the first line, the author immerses us in a reality in which the lyrical hero declares that there is no point in going to his friends for a dombra, since "there are no dombras" with them, and the friends themselves "have vanished". This may indicate different images, but in particular it indicates that Suleimenov notices the gradual disappearance of the Kazakh identity, the main symbol of which is the dombra. However, further the lyrical hero, not recognizing the fact of the gradual extinction of his culture, takes out two symbols of Soviet culture in the form of a "Tula double-barrel" and a "Pobeda" car. These two symbols became the basis for the narrator to save his culture. Weapons and a car named "Pobeda", which is translated from Russian as victory. This immediately creates a familiar and close to every Soviet reader image of the Great Patriotic War, which the narrator is going to. The symbol of the car "Pobeda" here simultaneously refers us to the Soviet identity of the narrator and to the victorious war for the preservation of his culture. It is already noticeable that the Kazakh and Soviet cultures are presented here not as opposing forces, but rather as friendly to each other. It turns out that it is not the Soviet identity that is the reason for the disappearance of the dombra, the narrator hints.

Then comes a metaphor comparing the Kyzylkum desert with the well-known State Department Store in Moscow (abbreviated as GUM). In addition to the obvious rhyme connection between these two words, the lyrical hero unironically compares a large shopping mall and a desert, explaining this by the presence of "musical departments" in both places, and "rams" and "oxen" wandering there. If the music departments are explained further, then the image of rams and oxen is a little more complicated. If rams and oxen are really found in the Kyzylkum deserts, then in Moscow it seems that not everything is so obvious and the author hid a mockery of people in Moscow under this metaphor, calling them rams and oxen. And here the ideal opposition will work, because just as there are no obvious "musical departments" in Kyzylkum, so in Moscow there are no obvious "rams" and "oxen" wandering there.

The narrator then "cuts down a saxaul trunk at the root" and creates a dombra base from it, which he calls "walnut". All of this is of great importance, since dombra is not made from this material due to its low strength. However, saxaul wood is ideal as fuel for a fire, surpassing all other types of wood and even average coal. This is an important point for the further narrative because the author then uses animal symbolism from Eastern European and Slavic folk traditions. The narrator combines "the sinews of a crow and a swan" for the dombra, which is obviously not a common material for strings, but may be a statement directed towards Russian culture. From the work by Aleksandr Gura on the symbolism of animals in Slavic culture, it is known that swans are animals that cannot be killed, and such a murder is equated to a terrible sin, in response to which a person and all his relatives die³⁵. Also, the fact of the unification of the sinews of the raven and the swan can mark the unification of the divine and light symbol, in the form of the swan, and the devilish and dark symbol, in the form of the raven³⁶. The combination of these biblical symbols of good and evil creates an inhuman force, which is difficult to counter with traditional instruments such as the "double bass" or "violin" and they fade into the background. Then the narrator again refers to other variations of the legends about crows and swans. When we read the line "the crow will sound out the coming storm", it refers us to the fact that crows were also harbingers of misfortune and warned of approaching problems, such as death³⁷. And the line "the swan will croak the swan's own song" gives us the idea that the swan is also a symbol of love³⁸. In the original version, there the swan man makes the sound of a raven out of feelings for his beloved swan woman. And it all speaks of the unnatural power of

³⁵ Gura, Aleksandr V. "Символика животных в славянской народной традиции. Традиционная духовная культура славян". *Издательство Индрик* (1997), p. 677.

³⁶ Gura, Aleksandr V. "Символика животных в славянской народной традиции. Традиционная духовная культура славян". *Издательство Индрик* (1997), p. 47.

³⁷ Gura, Aleksandr V. "Символика животных в славянской народной традиции. Традиционная духовная культура славян". *Издательство Индрик* (1997), p. 536.

³⁸ Gura, Aleksandr V. "Символика животных в славянской народной традиции. Традиционная духовная культура славян". *Издательство Индрик* (1997), p. 680.

this union of darkness and light, death and love. And the narrator in this situation appears as a person who has gained control over this power and is trying to take control of this power. However, such power inevitably "stretches its neck", "beats its wings" and "bucks", because it is beyond the control of an ordinary person. The narrator compares this power with "Bedouin woman dancing by the fires". And this becomes the last moment before the burning of the dombra and its last "scream."

What these images mean can be analyzed for a very long time, since they are quite multifaceted. We can look at this from the point of view of saving national identity on behalf of the author. Comparing the dombra with established instruments of Western civilization like the "double bass" and "violin", making them worthless, unlike the dombra. However, like any poem by Suleimenov about Kazakh identity, this one also has a more complex plot, which can be seen as a political statement. The author does not just use the phrase "dombra will glorify this poor country" but clearly separates his Kazakh culture from Russian and Western culture. The symbol of the dombra acts as an unbridled force, which the author describes with the image of a "Bedouin woman". For an inattentive reader, Suleimenov leaves room for a simpler interpretation of the plot of this work. In it, the dombra appears unworthy of recognition by Western instruments, like "the violin and double bass" and they react, but it is unclear whether they react with contempt to the dombra or to themselves.

And if we consider a parallel narrative, then there the dombra causes envy in these instruments. And in this version, the dombra is an allegory for the entire Kazakh culture, and the other instruments are allegories for Russian and Western cultures, which cannot accept the primacy of the dombra over them, and it burns. And then everything ends with the recognition that "the rams' sinews" are still stronger. This statement would make absolutely no sense if we do not consider it through the line about the rams wandering around Moscow. Then the whole picture flirts with new colors and the author's statement becomes more understandable.

Suleimenov proved with the last line that the line about the rams in Moscow was not a mistake, but a deliberate choice, which in the end concludes about the strength of Moscow and its strength, even with the most unnaturally strong dombra. And if we consider a parallel narrative, then there the dombra causes envy in these instruments. And in this version, the dombra is an allegory for the entire Kazakh culture, and the other instruments are allegories for Russian and Western cultures, which cannot accept the primacy of the dombra over them, and it burns. And then everything ends with the recognition that "the rams' sinews" are still stronger. This statement would make absolutely no sense if we do not consider it through the line about the rams wandering around Moscow. Then the whole picture flirts with new colors and the author's statement becomes more understandable. Suleimenov proved with the last line that the line about the rams in Moscow was not a mistake, but a deliberate choice, which in the end concludes about the strength of Moscow and its strength, even with the most unnaturally strong dombra.

subtext. In the following lines, the hero's recognition of the strength of this country flashes, which can be selected in the word "invaders". However, here one can see that the author by the word "Franks" means a collective image of the West, which was engaged in the conquest of countries on an equal basis with France. This is confirmed by the example of the hero, whose ancestor "lassoed your [France's] knights". The confrontation of the steppe peoples, like the Mongol Empire and its successor, the Golden Horde, obviously did not take place specifically against France, but rather against many countries with knights of that time, who were mainly from Western countries. Then again there is a note of envy through the prism of the ancestor of the lyrical hero, whose eyes are full of "strange sorrow", while recognizing all the gracefulness of the "metals" of their armor. Despite the fact that the ancestor could defeat these knights, he understood the trends. The lyrical hero returns to his time and after empty walks through the halls with diamonds and other artifacts of the past, asks the question "Where are you, Asia". The hero, as it were, moves on to rhetorical questions about the future of Asia, and about who will break the "slow silence" of Asia and who, according to the precepts of his ancestor, will conquer these empty halls only "not with swords". Here we have a parallel narrative. One of a modern hero in the halls of the Louvre in France, and the other of his ancestor who tried to conquer the West with the power of the sword. The modern hero seeks a solution to the mistakes of the past ancestor's approach but maintains the same goal of wanting to get what Western civilization has. The memory of their past.

It is also worth paying attention to how the author separates the two lyrical heroes. There is the lyrical hero who "wanders the halls" and there is the ancestor of this lyrical hero. And in the lines "And such a strange sorrow // Would appear in his eyes" the author does not single out who exactly experiences these feelings. The lyrical hero can experience these feelings because now in these halls he wanders "aimlessly" and asks himself the question "Where are you, Asia?". His ancestor can experience these feelings because defeating the Western "knights" he froze

"over a pile of graceful metals". Both lyrical heroes feel similar emotions. They are both in the lands of the West, both are at war, both see the greatness of the West. The main difference is that the main lyrical hero is worried about not seeing Asia. For him, the main source of his thoughts is the disappearance of his ancestors from the history of the West. He knows that the ancestor was here, just like him, but cannot find any evidence. He tries to find traces in "diamonds", "two-handed swords", but sees only "slow silence". He, already as a man of the new time, comes with his new vision. He wants to "reach the West", but "not with swords". This refers us to the biography of the author, who, as a Soviet delegate, performed in France demonstrating his Kazakh national culture. Showed Asia to the West without using weapons, only words. And when the author asks about which "of the great ones" will conquer the West, he largely refers to himself and to the people after him.

Suleimenov demonstrates that he loves France and the West from the very first line, but it is also important to him that the West loves Asia. It is important to him that these halls capture the war that led to friendship. That France knows about Asia in the same way that Asia knows about France. The lyrical heroes demonstrate this admiration for French culture, and they would also like the French halls, through which the lyrical hero wanders, to once show Asia with the same admiration. This very strongly refers us, as readers, to the very concept of Soviet identity. The way it was invented. It was supposed to unite all cultures and create a space for mutual respect. In this work, Suleimenov appears not only as a Kazakh writer, but also as a Soviet one. He strives to show his "Asian" identity, while showing that Soviet reality gives him the opportunity to talk about his national culture around the world. It turns out to be a complex system in which the USSR benefits from popularizing the idea of "friendship of peoples" on a global scale. And he, as an author of his time, who came from a cultural space that contributed to the development of multiculturalism, received the opportunity to talk about his culture to the whole world.

CONCLUSION

This paper explores complex themes regarding the early poetic works of Olzhas Suleimenov. Through historical context, biographical excursion and analysis of several of his poems, I was able to delve into the issues of national authors in the context of Soviet reality. Olzhas Suleimenov, as a very famous national author of his time, on the scale of the entire Soviet state, opens up space for various analyses and interpretations. In this paper, I aimed to examine his work in terms of multiculturalism, focusing on how he combined references to several national identities through his poetic works, while creating complex connections between these identities. Since the concept of "friendship of peoples" was active in his time, I was curious to determine how he saw the Soviet state and his own place in this Soviet cultural space.

In his works, he referred to many different sources, from Russian folk mythology of animals to his own travels around the world as a Soviet delegate. In his poetry, he laid down many layers, each of which reveals the complexity of his national identity. In "Ainalayin" he combines Kazakh identity with Soviet identity, simultaneously revealing many subtleties of Kazakh identity to the Russian-speaking reader. However, he leaves some layers and references only to Kazakh-speaking readers, making his work somewhat more complex not only in terms of form, but also in terms of content. In "Dombra" he delves into the Soviet context of Kazakh reality, while integrating Russian mythology into it. And the result is an extremely interesting connection, which ultimately looks like both a complementary message for a multicultural context and also a sarcastic attack at the same time. The "Louvre" verse shows the author's vision of multiculturalism. The opposition of the West and the East, refers to his own biography as a Soviet delegate, the inclusion of Asia in the historical context of the Western world. In this work, Suleimenov managed to lay down several deep messages through the unification of two lyrical heroes. One, whose main meaning is the rehabilitation of Asia in the eyes of the West, through

"conquest" without weapons. And the other, who is his distant ancestor, who went to the West with weapons.

Suleimenov's works help to better understand the Soviet context, since due to their contradictory nature, it is sometimes difficult to identify all sorts of state initiatives and recognize the cultural messages that appear through the development of the state. Suleimenov is a writer of his time and many of his thoughts regarding multiculturalism were laid down before he was born. He, as a writer and poet, revealed these complex political and cultural actions through the prism of his own perception, bringing readers closer to understanding Soviet reality. The Soviet state was based on fundamental principles, one of which became the reason for the emergence of Suleimenov and writers like him. Suleimenov became one of the most important authors of his time, since he, as a national author, wrote about multiculturalism in his works. It was very important that these were national authors, since it was through this image of a multicultural state that the Soviet state built its opposition to Western colonialism and imperialism. And authors like Suleimenov were examples that this concept of a multicultural state had its place.

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APPENDIX

The verses were translated by Nurdos Berdigulov.

1) ЛУВР

Я люблю тебя, Франция.
Твоим именем звали всех интервентов –
фрэнгами,
Твоих рыцарей прадед арканом
Из седел таскал,
И над грудой изящных желез
Замирал с инструментами,
И такая в глазах
Удивительная тоска.
Я по залам брожу бесцельно,
На алмазы гляжу бесценные.
Удивляюсь:
«Ну где же ты, Азия?
Может быть, в этих чистых
алмазах?
В этих узких мечах двуручных,
Что ковались тебе навстречу?
Ты когда-то дошла до
И замолкла.
А кто нарушит
Твое медленное молчание?
Кто, великий, дойдет до Запада,
Завоюет,
Но не мечами,
Эти залы,
Пустые залы?..»

1961

Louvre (Translation)

I love you, France.
Your name was given to all the invaders -
Franks,
My ancestor lassoed your knights
Dragging them from saddles,
And over a pile of graceful metals
He would freeze with his tools,
And such a strange sorrow
Would appear in his eyes.
I wander through the halls aimlessly,
Gazing at diamonds priceless.
I wonder:

Spin, ainlayin, my Earth!
Like no one else,
Today I understand you,
all your illnesses,
 I take on
I wander, I circle your
 roads...

1967

3) ДОМБРА

Я за домброй к знакомым не пойду,
и домбр нет, знакомые повывелись.
Я тульское, двухствольное найду,
из гаража во двор «Победу» выведу
и покачу по тракту в Кзылкум,
там - все. Пустыня - это тот же ГУМ,
там есть и музыкальные отделы,
бараны бродят, вол,
спилю под корень саксаульный ствол,
и выдолблю, и под орех отделаю.
Домбра прославит бедную страну, спарю я жилы ворона и лебедя на саксаулине и так
рвану, -
что контрабасы застыдятся лепета и скрипка вспыхнет - как она грубит!..
И вспомнит ствол пустынные закаты, и ворон о буране затрубит, и лебедь по лебедушке
закаркает.
Я пальцами играю на хрящах.
Домбра, как черный лебедь, шеей тянется,
крылами бьет! Пинается! -
Кричать!..
Как бедуинка над кострами в танце. Сгорай, домбра!
Но вы опять правы,
они, увы, прочней - бараньи жилы...

1964

DOMBRA (Translation)

I won't go to my friends for a dombra,
and there are no dombras, my friends have vanished.
I'll find a Tula double-barrel,
pull the "Pobeda" from the garage to the yard,
and drive down the track to Kzylkum,
where there's everything. The desert - it's like GUM,

it has musical departments,
rams wander there, and oxen,
I'll cut down a saxaul trunk at the root,
hollow it out, and finish it in walnut.

The dombra will glorify this poor country,
I'll join the sinews of a crow and a swan
on the saxaul neck, and strike such a sound—
that double basses will blush at their babbling,
and the violin will blaze, as it harshly groans!

The trunk will remember the desert sunsets,
the crow will sound out the coming storm,
and the swan will croak the swan's own song.
I play with my fingers on cartilage.
The dombra, like a black swan, stretches its neck,
it beats its wings! It bucks! -
To scream!
Like a Bedouin woman dancing by the fires. Burn, dombra!

But you are right again,
they, alas, are stronger - the rams' sinews...

1964