

Studying the past

Historical knowledge is one of the main intellectual and cultural resources for shaping national identity and civilizational value. Each country and its nation have a unique historical path. Therefore the history of our country has always had and will have its own national view of the past. This point of view is created by professional historians.

In 1996 in the first Address to the Nation President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev noted the following: “The national idea can be based only on a new understanding of our own history”. A new stage of the development of historical science in Kazakhstan began with defining the tasks of republican importance in the Address of the President called “Strategy "Kazakhstan- 2050" - a new policy of the established state”. In this document development of our culture, traditions and identity is listed among its fundamental priorities. The Strategy focused on the fact that “we have to protect our national culture and traditions in all their diversity and greatness and to preserve our cultural heritage”.

The community of historians has a task to rethink and interpret social, political, spiritual and cultural life of the country. Historical knowledge is one of the main intellectual and cultural resources for shaping national identity and civilizational value. Modern history should be studied and the scientific community of the country seeks to organise this work via mechanisms of social service.

- We have to work out a common concept of Kazakhstan’s history on a new level. It should be connected with the world’s history and clearly show the place of Kazakhstan in global historical processes and the system of its interconnection and scientific periodization – underlined Marat Tazhin, Secretary of State of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Based on this thesis we have to work out a strategic concept of development of national historical science in the context of modern historical reality, define the main parameters and give a prognosis of evolution of humanitarian science as the whole.

I am sure that the previous discussion with participation of outstanding national historians allowed rethinking the role of a large group of scientists in the further strengthening of our statehood. The National Congress of Historians is aimed at defining the key priorities of strategic development of historical and humanitarian sciences, historical education and shaping of patriotic identity of our people. Famous scientists, prominent representatives of national science should participate actively in the process of implementation of the state policy in the sphere of development of science, education and culture.

Taking into account the problems mentioned during the meeting I consider that it is necessary to establish an independent research group of our scientists, including anthropologists, ethnographers, linguists. They would work closely on the problem of ethnic genesis of Kazakh people. Today strengthening scientific and research potential of the national historical science is a priority. It should be achieved through targeted education of scientists: we experience the lack of such professionals as paleogeneticists who know the methods of work with DNA (leading scientific centres have an opportunity to train them). It is essential to establish the national centre of rare manuscripts and books on national history and culture which would collect and keep our historical and cultural written heritage on the history of Kazakhstan (such centre could be established under the National Archive or the library of the Gumilyov Eurasian National University).

In this context the question of sources on various periods of national history continues to be a major concern. This problem was repeatedly discussed at the special meeting with the participation of academic community in the Committee for Science, Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The meeting made a right decision to establish a group of our scientists to work in foreign archives and depositories of manuscripts to study original sources on the history of Kazakhstan and Kazakh nation. Archaeological and archival search of new or little-known sources and documents have to be permanent and systematic. While preparing new scientific works and tutorials we have to organise special research and methodological seminars, round tables to gather experts in controversial aspects of political and ethnic history. We propose to establish a forum for discussion under the National Congress of Historians. The question of methodology for historical research remains acute. In most cases scientific and methodological instruments (principles, methods and criteria) for historical researches of national scientists are very much behind the modern world humanitarian idea. Therefore, we require new methodological works which would be prepared on the basis of ethnic and cultural specific of Kazakhstan's history.

At the same time, the history is a core element of educational and cultural policy of a state and society. The construction of a new museum will be finished soon. Accordingly, the question of finding exhibits for it is of a special importance. This includes a great historical-museum and cultural-restoration work of governmental agencies and professionals concerned. In recent years our scientists made a number of unique discoveries of global importance. Therefore, historians and archaeologists will participate actively in this work.

We have a rich military history of nomads. At the same time, the historiography does not contain information on military history of states and nations which inhabited the territory of our country. I propose to prepare and publish a book series "Military history of Kazakhs" within the work of the National Congress of Historians. If we conduct this research, undoubtedly, this will support military-patriotic component of historical education and expand knowledge of young generation.

It is also important to pay attention to proposed competitive scientific projects in the sphere of humanitarian sciences. This means preparation and carrying out preliminary expertise of scientific applications on historical problems. I believe that it is necessary that new scientific projects and applications on ethnological and archaeological problems meet the approval from the National Congress of Historians.

Another actual question is popularisation of historical knowledge, factors, events, unique cultural values of Kazakhs and other Turkic nations both through work of specialised governmental agencies and targeted support from public associations dealing with socially significant projects on historical and cultural heritage. Now we work on creating a TV programme on historical and cultural themes. Through this programme we are planning to highlight emerging problems of our history and activity of Kazakhstan's scientific and historical community.

We have much to do. Hungary annually holds the World Kurultai (congress) of Hun and Turkic nations. Scientists, politicians, journalists, businessmen, representatives of non-governmental organisations from all over the world attend this event. Why couldn't we organise a kurultai of all Turkic nations in Kazakhstan? Without any doubts, such significant cultural events will help to promote historical and cultural heritage of Eurasian Turks and, in particular, Kazakhs.

In 2012 President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev for the first time recognised the fact of Kazakhstan's Holodomor (Greta Famine) at the official level. The first monument to victims of the tragedy was established in the city of Astana with the direct participation our President. The first international conference on this problem was organised as

well. But we have to go on. For example, it is necessary to study fully that historical period interviewing older generation. It is important to define memorable historical places in each region and organise excursions for the youth. For instance, there is Akmola Camp for Women of Traitors to Motherland not far from Astana (the village of Akmol). Contact with the history will strengthen patriotism of our young generation.

In view of the fact that knowing national history begins from the respect for the history of our homeland, it is necessary to prepare tutorial on local history for each region.

Such events with the support from the National Congress of Historians of Kazakhstan will allow improving historical education in the country.

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