

Lev Gumilyov and Kazakhstan with the past to the future

Lev Gumilyov's amazing ability to link the past and future, finding echo of antiquity in everyday life, surprisingly accurately correlates with Kazakh tradition to collate all ongoing events with ancestral experience. His exploratory audacity, unique algorithm of scientific retrieval, fantasy, love of life and insight have conquered minds and imagination of bellicose nomads-Turks' descendants. The historian himself often demonstrated deep understanding of Kazakhs' deeds, invariably correlating them with history, customs and traditions.

In Soviet time doing obeisance to Gumilyov was not an easy task, as reputation of the disgraced scientist restrained reasonable functionaries of all levels.

Naturally, despite open declaration of his preferences, there had never been any tokens of high regard from representatives of Soviet republics' governmental authorities. The scientist expressed his attitude not only to Kazakhs, but to all Turkic ethnoses in introduction to the book "Ancient Turks" (1967): «I dedicate this book to our brothers – Turkic peoples of the Soviet Union.»

While sharing the scientist's brotherly feelings, nonetheless, Turkic nations of the Soviet Union did not have systemic possibilities to express reciprocal gratitude. Open communication could be conducted only at non-system, personal level.

As a consequence, L.N. Gumilyov's associates and followers are ready to blame aforesaid brothers for callousness, transposing situation in conditions of the Soviet system onto latter times, which is not quite fair. For instance, S.B. Lavrov said following, "A logical question arises: why Gumilyov, who had devoted all his conscious life to exposing "the black legend", who had immensely loved and respected nations of the East, had not received any real aid from "the high and mighty" of the Union's Muslim republics? I was not the only one who have noticed this, the author of introduction to "The Black legend", L.N. Vyacheslav Yermolayev wrote, that L.N. Gumilyov received a lot of letters and greetings from Mongolia, Tataria, Kazakhstan, Middle Asia; he received multiple invitations and was visited by delegations; warm and sincere words were told to him; robes, tea cups and tyubeteikas were presented to him, but that was it. There had never been any considerable support neither from local clerisy, nor from administrative bodies of respective national republics; even his book "A millennium around the Caspiy" in Russian language was published only in Azerbaijan."

All of us were prisoners of the same socialistic "camp". Saying that national republics should have held out a helping hand to Gumilyov at hard period of academic defamation, is not quite correct. Why not Russians, not Russia, RSFSR? Gumilyov was a patriot and first of all he should have been supported by compatriots, but he was not, because political system in Russia was not different from that in Kazakhstan or any other republic of the USSR. The question is not "which republic should have held out a helping hand", but "was this assistance even possible in political conditions of that time?".

All of us should have helped Gumilyov, but none of us could. We just did not have a systemic possibility.

Respect for Gumilyov was growing at personal level.

It would be right to say that in Soviet time the number of people in Kazakhstan, knowing about Gumilyov's works, was small. Mostly, it was a narrow circle of intellectuals. If even in Moscow and Leningrad, where you had more chances to find a copy of "Earth ethnogenesis and

biosphere”, leaders of academic society could not or were not willing to publish his works in mass editions, what could we possibly say about peripheral republics?

S.B. Lavrov gives indirect confirmation, “Over 20 years I had not heard even one opinion about the book “Ancient Turks”, there had not been any resonance. Yakuts were the first people who gave response, Kazakhs got interested soon after, but they told me that when that book was published, they could not believe that someone somewhere in Moscow or Leningrad was able to write genially about Turks. Before all those collisions with “discussion and denunciation” L. Gumilyov was writing to P. Savitsky, “Turks” are twice thicker than “Huns”, although a period which had been covered by researchers is twice less. I love “Turks” more, because one can imagine VI-VIII centuries’ people and events much more vividly. I got acquainted with many khans and warlords as if they had not smouldered to ashes in pyres 1300 years ago. This is where I found use for my knowledge of the Turkic and Persian languages”.

L.N. Gumilyov was the first to raise his voice in defence of unique identity of Turkic-Mongolian history. He was the first to oppose Eurocentric legend about the Tartar Mongol Yoke and long-time antagonism between steppe nomads and settled peasants. He revealed that there had never been persistent life-and-death struggle, but rather a system of dynamic and complicated political relations accompanied by immutable sympathies and respect for each other’s ethnic peculiarity. The author concluded, “Literally taken fruits of fervid fantasy have spawned evil, “black” legend about Mongolian atrocities”.

In his last book Gumilyov-historian persisted in his struggle with “black legend”, suggested a lot of new, nonstandard ideas, such as disclosure of accepted version of the events which took place in the beginning of the 13th century in Middle Asia. L.N. Gumilyov noted that the version about “wild nomads who had ruined cultural oases of agricultural societies in Syr Darya and Amu Darya basins”, was created by the court Muslim historiographers, while the reality was quite different. In ancient Khwarezm Turkic soldiers made up main military power. Population of Samarkand, Bukhara and Merv had been suffering and rising against them. On top of that, Khwarazmshah Muhammed himself was an initiator of the war with Mongols “only because steppe people did not believe in Allah”. The data on Merv, which would re-establish strength of its armed forces and revolt a year after another “total devastation”, are a legend as well.

Lev Nikolayevich wrote only truth about Eurasian peoples, feeling great love and sympathy for them. “Personally, close contacts with Kazakhs, Tatars and Uzbeks demonstrated that it is easy to be friends with these peoples. You just have to be sincerely benevolent and respect their customs’ peculiarity. After all, they do not impose their behavioral style on anyone” (“Izvestiya”, 13 April, 1988)”.

Vyacheslav Yurjevich Yermolayev wrote, “Lev Nikolayevich Gumilyov was the first to raise his voice in defence of originality of Turkic-Mongolian history and culture, which had been denied the right of equality with European or Chinese history. The honour of new interpretation of the role of Turkic and Mongolian nations in Russian history, based on strictly scientific factual knowledge, belongs to Lev Nikolayevich. It turned out that there had never been neither continuous life-and-death war, not hatred, but a system of complex political relations with invariable sympathy and respect for each other’s ethnic peculiarity.

A major part of his life Lev Nikolayevich had been writing “for the desk drawer”. Full collection of his works saw light only after his death. Many obstacles vanished with dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Gumilyov's books started to get published in mass edition. His popularity seemed unprecedented for scientific community. Scientific conferences, dedicated to his life and works, were being held one after another; they enriched science with new knowledge. Gumilyov's Eurasian concept has transformed from a scientific doctrine into practical programme used by politicians. Foundation of Eurasian National University in Astana, named after Lev Nikolayevich Gumilyov, became apotheosis of his recognition.

L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian University was founded by the President's of the Republic of Kazakhstan decree, dated 23 May, 1996.

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