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The idea of work in the philosophy of Abai Qunanbaiuly

Abstract. Today, the issue of cultural and economic development of Kazakhstan is particularly acute. Competition in the tourism, investment, and agricultural sectors necessitates maintaining the country's image in the international arena, developing its domestic economy, and raising the level of culture. The ways to achieve these goals are contained in a variety of philosophical and artistic works, therefore, this paper considers some of them. The object of the study is the work of Abai Qunanbaiuly. The purpose of the study is to consider the philosophy of work in Abai's work as a tool for achieving well-being by the Kazakh people. The following methods were used: biographical, literary hermeneutics, elements of comparative analysis, cultural. This study examines the work and personality of Abai Qunanbaiuly relative to his era. The poet's thoughts on the value and significance of education are also analysed. Abai's thoughts on the idea of honest work addressed to his people are philosophically differentiated. The results of the study showed that, according to Abai, education and employment are necessary for the development of society. In turn, laziness and unemployment lead to lack of spirituality and economic decline. The practical value of the results obtained lies in the recommendations on the development of the economy of Kazakhstan, derived based on the analysis of the works of Abai Qunanbaiuly

Keywords: criticism of society; the concept of work; the value of education; Kazakh society, poetry

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INTRODUCTION

The current economic situation in Kazakhstan depends on both the domestic policy of the president and the country's activities on the international stage. The task of Kazakhs today is to acquire education and contribute to their people using the acquired profession. This idea is guided by the philosophical doctrine examined in this paper. In Kazakh society, there were many talented thinkers who made a significant contribution to the cultural development of their people. Abai, who lived in the Kazakh steppe in the 19th century, significantly influenced the formation of Kazakh philosophy by developing the theme of industriousness in his works. The practical focus

and relevance of his sayings also influenced the mentality of the people. The era in which Abai lived was a time of feudalism and Kazakh dependence on the Russian Tsar. Kazakhs were mainly involved in animal husbandry, so it is natural that his views on economy related to livestock and property (Valenza, 2018; Barlybayeva, 2020; Yenisir *et al.*, 2020). A. Nysanbayev (2011) characterised this situation as follows: "Abai, from his adolescence, was in the midst of his era, and the socio-economic conditions of the present are vividly and accurately reflected in his socio-political views, artistic creativity, and real activities. Abai early felt his outstanding spiritual potential and did

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not err in his high task". In previous works, Zh. Moldabekov (2009), R. Sookias *et al.* (2018), C. Kerven *et al.* (2021) considered Abai's creativity from literary and philosophical perspectives.

Abai was a social critic of Kazakh society. Most of his works are devoted to criticising the society in which he lived. The ability to see the shortcomings of society is also an art. His consistent and just criticism is an expression of the author's active position, and the call to eliminate shortcomings and lead the population to historical progress is not only contemplation but also action. All these qualities were in Abai (Caffee, 2018). He does not condemn the rich, the poor, or the district in particular; instead, he criticises the negative aspects and ignorance of the Kazakh people as a whole. He did not hate his people but wanted to correct their mistakes through criticism: "Қайран елім, қазағы қайран жұртым" – "деп толғаған болатын" (Moldabekov, 2009). Abai was a talented person, but he lived in accordance with his time. Nevertheless, it can be assumed that if he had been directed toward the path of science from childhood, instilled with knowledge, sent to study in the Russian Empire or other countries, and then given the opportunity to refine the acquired knowledge, he would have become an outstanding scholar. Firstly, Abai had a tendency towards scientific thinking and a creative approach to problem-solving, which gives reason to consider him talented. Secondly, he came from a relatively affluent family, having the appropriate material conditions for travel and education in other states.

It is also worth noting that Abai's academic education was not positively influenced by his surrounding environment. In those times, curiosity was not a widespread trait among the population. The centres of learning were limited to religiously oriented madrasas in cities such as Bukhara and Samarkand. The knowledge obtained in these institutions was considered of great value: "I sent my son to the madrasa for him to study, not for positions or fame" (Moldabekov, 2009). For instance, I. Feher (2020) preferred academic education, while Abai was familiar with the works of poets and writers from the East, Kazakhstan, and the Russian Empire. In this regard, Kazakh researcher Zh. Moldabekov (2009) characterises his general worldview as follows: "Jürek ünınde, parasatty sözınde, süıspenşılık ümıtınde; qarsylasynan asyp tüsetın bıılmıdarlyq, sezımtaldyq, erıktılık ikemdılgınde; qazaqıty qor qylatyn keselderden saqtandyratyn talap, mahabbat, üğym sıaqty ruhtyñ eñ myқты qainar közınde, quat aimağynda; tütastyq pen tynıstyqıty turalaıtyn, tatulyqıty tärıbieleıtın toqtamynda; şyğys pen batys mädenıetın üılestretın şeberlıgınde".

Abai primarily wrote poetry, subsequently giving rise to "Abaidyñ qara sözderi" (Kunanbayev, 2012). His critical judgments are strongly philosophical. Abai was not an ascetic, but a considerable part of his life was devoted to solitary contemplation. Abai stood far above the masses in his consciousness and worldview, aiming to guide his fellow countrymen on a noble, progressive path. There was no second wise adviser and generally well-balanced, enlightened person like Abai, and he was troubled by this fact: "I was one against a thousand, don't blame me". Admittedly, it cannot be said that there was no one in the Kazakh steppe who could engage in a discussion with him.

It is also known that he had a spiritual dialogue with wise individuals like Mashhur Zhusup and was acquainted with Kazakh poets of that era and their works. The scientific originality of this study lies in the fact that it, for the first time, analyses the poet's ideas in a cultural and economic context. The purpose of the study is to consider the philosophy of work in Abai's work as a tool for achieving well-being by the Kazakh people.

Criticism of the negative qualities of the Kazakh society in the "Abaidyñ qara sözderi"

Abai's works do not exhibit distinct religiosity, fanaticism, or ideology. However, he cannot be labelled as either an atheist or a deist; rather, he is considered a son of the Kazakh people adhering to the traditional Muslim religion (Alsabekov *et al.*, 2018). From his perspective, the population should be armed not only with religious but also academic knowledge. Abai's awareness of the importance of the educational institution and the value of knowledge primarily developed in the humanitarian field. His teachings evolved in the realm of social sciences: philosophy, psychology, literature, poetry, history, and others. In his works, Abai critically addresses Kazakh society, noting that it significantly lags behind other civilised nations in terms of education and labour. He posed the question: "Is there a possibility for Kazakhs to equal other developed, civilized, advanced nations of the world? Can they eliminate their shortcomings, negative qualities?" He answered that if the Kazakhs do not fundamentally change their lives, their attitude toward the world and themselves, it will be difficult for them to join the ranks of the world's advanced nations (Kunanbayev, 2012).

Criticising the consciousness of the Kazakhs, Abai reveals their well-established old habits that prevent the people from changing, developing, and moving towards progress ("Abaidyñ qara sözderi") (Kunanbayev, 2012). Among these negative traits, he particularly condemned laziness and lack of courage. Abai considered laziness the most dreadful of human flaws because, instead of building a worthy life, developing their abilities, and gaining respect among other nations through diligent work and active engagement, Kazakhs prefer idleness and leisure. He believes that from this vice also arise frivolity and a superficial approach to matters ("Fourth Word"). Abai notes that there are many people in Kazakh society who do not work conscientiously and possess all these undesirable qualities. They are occupied with activities that do not bring true success but instead indulge in futile and empty pursuits. Abai attempts to uncover and explain the behaviour of such individuals (Bakas *et al.*, 2020). In the philosopher's opinion, such senseless actions lack logic. Unfortunately, there are few people who, having mobilised their abilities, want to achieve success through their work, that is, to live an honest life, to strive for the good, for true human affairs, according to Abai. Everyone wants to achieve success and fame in ways contrary to human life principles ("The Twenty-sixth Word"). Abai was always troubled by thoughts of how to rectify society and overcome its existing contradictions (Alsabekov, 2018; Fayard, 2021).

The philosophy of labour and condemnation of idleness are also evident in Abai's poems. Quite often, he attributes the poverty of the Kazakhs not only to laziness

but also to other negative qualities. In the poem “Oh, my Kazakhs! My poor people...” Abai puts forward the idea of the unity of the people as a necessary condition for overall economic development: “I do not hope for your correction, / If the people do not take their fate into their own hands”. He considers disunity and dishonour as the causes of the decline of Kazakh lands in this area: “No unity, no honour, discord everywhere. / There are fewer herds, more mistakes in the steppes” (Kunanbayev, 2012).

In the poem “The dishonourable beast is greedier”, Abai also addresses his people, urging them not to indulge the lords who, in the absence of high moral qualities, enrich themselves through nepotism and fraud: “The dishonourable, greedier than a beast, / Dirty in words and deeds – / Such is the hero of our days / ruling over you, Kazakh”. He condemns laziness and idleness in the spirit of the philosophy of labour: “His dream is without labour / To become rich and important. / Lying on his side at home, / Wandering from feast to feast / And on free food, / Like cattle, accumulating fat”. At the end of the work, there is a call to free the Kazakh people from those who parasitise on it: “It’s time to finally / Nail scoundrels to the post!” Similar ideas are traced in other poems of the poet: “Finally, I became a volost...” “The bat lives and guards its cattle”, “Justice will weigh everything on the scales”, “The ruler is happy with the authorities” (Kunanbayev, 2012), and others.

In Abai’s opinion, full employment contributes to economic prosperity (Kudaibergenova, 2018). Many try to live the “easy way” through flattery, corruption, nepotism, etc., as they are not used to having a steady job with a stable income. And as long as there are people with this type of employment in society, it will develop very slowly or degrade. In turn, a high level of employment creates suitable conditions for achieving social and economic well-being. Due to their activity, the Kazakhs will be able to live like other advanced nations. In several of his works, the poet calls for work and criticises indifference to it, laziness, and negligence, which consume society, lead to stagnation, and ultimately result in social stagnation. “No work, no labour, Kazakhs are poor, seeking sustenance, not wandering...” – Abai laments unemployment and inaction. Characterising the formation of a social group that once believed that cattle should be obtained through deceit, terror, and theft, the poet said: “Cunning, intimidation, and cattle theft do not add but kill quickly... Wealth gotten without labour will not bring profit... Snow melts quickly” – he warns against easy acquisition. Abai teaches not to be lazy but to earn an honest living.

“Jalğa júr, ja’t jerge ket, mal tawıp kel, Malayń bolsa sılamay tura almas el. Qarwıńń basında qayrat qılmay, Qańgıp ótqen ómir diń bári de – jel...” – states the poet (Oskembay, 2018). Abai saw that laziness is not only socially harmful but also has a detrimental effect on spirituality. In the third Word, he said, “Every lazy person is cowardly and weak; all weak ones are cowardly and proud; every proud person is stupid and ignorant; every fool is rude, every rude person is lazy and insatiable, and insatiability breeds hatred towards anyone”. Abai also noted that there are groups of people who live by begging instead of improving the social climate, multiplying their wealth through work. Olap mal kóbeise malshılarga baqtırmaq, ózderi yetke, qımızǵa toyıp, súludy jailap, júyırıqtı baylap

otırmaq “They have no food, no work, few people”, warns Abai against unemployment and recklessness. – Cunning, deceit, and begging are the lot of dogs. If you pray to God first and rely on your own strength second, your work will be rewarded” (Kudaibergenova, 2018). As evident, Abai places work second after God.

Elements of the philosophy of labour in the works of Abai Qunanbaiuly

Abai also paid special attention to social conditions, the nature, and the content of work, concluding that many years of labour educate a person. He concludes, “In the end, we plant a big harvest of labour, starting to learn from an early age” (Asemzhan, 2016). In this thought, Abai’s foresight is evident. He wanted to change the character and content of the Kazakh tradition of only engaging in animal husbandry. In connection with this, the thinker highly appreciated the role of art in the public life of the people. Abai had a very high opinion of those who worked conscientiously and engaged in craftsmanship, “without adding deception”. After all, the fruits of his activity not only improve his social position but also contribute to the well-being of the majority, becoming a factor in their interaction with each other, satisfying social needs. At the same time, mastering a craft changes the social aspect of the content of labour. Wise Abai, who understood the essence of his work and deeply knew the character of his people, their unwillingness to work, and their desire to be satisfied with less than nature can give, feared that there would be Kazakhs who, having gained a little skill in art from the Almighty, would not try to do more, improve, and hone their skill. Pointing out the conservative nature of such work, Abai reveals the reason for its unpopularity. “Ĝilum tappay maqtanba...”, “Internatta oqıp júwr...”, “Jıgitter, oım arzan, qúlqı qımbat”, “Bir dáwren qemdi qúnge bozbalalıq...” degen óleınderi men on beseınshi, on seğızınshi, on to’qızınshi, o’tız altınshi, o’tız jetinshi, o’tız to’qızınshi, etc. With these wise words, the poet warns about what should be avoided in public life, what behaviour to adhere to and what human qualities to develop in oneself.

Work is directly related to human nature and dignity. And an example, vital proof of this is shown in the following lines of Abai’s poem:

Öz úıńnen toıarǵa qoıń qısqqa,
As berer awıldı izdep júrsın bosqa.
Bir jılıq pen bir ayaq qımız bergem
Derew senı jumsaydı bir jumısqa.

Just as certain conditions are necessary for the implementation of something, there are conditions for the implementation of labour. Those are a risk and a requirement:

“Táweqelsiz, talapsız mal tabılmas,
Enbek qılmas erinşek adam bolmas.
Eseq kötn jwsañ da adam bolmas,
Qolǵa jwqpas, eş adam qemite almas”

(Kunanbayev, 2012).

Risk and demand are conditions of entrepreneurship and business. In the Kazakh understanding, wealth is given by God, not by man. However, there are people who misunderstand this statement and fall into inaction. “God created wealth, and God created poverty. But God did not make you rich or poor”. Some people see God as the cause of their poverty because of superficial understanding.

“They say a bad person fears God”; “Doesn’t God give you all the conditions to work, earn cattle, be rich?”; “If all twelve of your family members are healthy, do not say you are poor”; “If you have no worries, do not complain” – inexhaustible treasures of Kazakh wisdom teach proverbs and sayings. Without knowing these simple worldview regularities, the Son of Man, without asking God for wealth, begs someone like himself. “You want cattle, but why do you need it? First, do you pray to God? You just wish. God can give, but you will not keep it. God gave you the strength to work and raise cattle. Do you plan to spend this energy on halal work? You do not want to. You do not want to spend anything. He gave you great knowledge that you do not read. He gave you reason and understanding, but how do you use it? How can one not become rich if they work and look for a job? You do not need it. Your lot is threats, pleas, and deception, that is what you seek” (Kunanbayev, 2012).

Abai, who measured his whole life with labour, even approached the question of love and infatuation from this perspective. The thinker analysed these concepts, regretting that such a feeling is inherent in a person: “Love and friendship are not on equal terms with business. Labour is not a five-day romance. Love is short-lived, but there is no shortage of work”. Labour is the strength and mind of a person, and it should be invested in something long-lasting, not transient and unstable. Based on these considerations, Abai analysed the types of work in Kazakh culture and introduced the concept of “narrative work”.

At the bottom years of work are laid,

Studying since early childhood.

Dancing was not an art,

Everything except labour is false

(Kudaibergenova, 2018).

There are only two types of work that Abai completely approved, which passed through the iron knot of criticism and reflection. These are planting crops and getting an education from an early age. Al jurttıń bari qyzyǵatyn, eldiń bari úmtılatyn bi bolw men bolıstyqtı aqn jaramsyz dep tawıp otr. All they do is spend all their possessions, and sometimes even conscience – this is not art. A simple profession (cultivation) places knowledge above strength and power. Now the country’s economic situation depends on two things – agriculture and new technologies based on high innovations. The president’s task, who set the goal of entering the top 30 countries, is to involve young people not in power but in education, prepare professionals, and boost agriculture. Admittedly, the country also needs deputies and akims, but in the national plan, this is not the goal. The goal is to do everything possible and valuable for your people. This idea leads to the teachings of Abai, who has become the unchanging iron support of the Kazakh people, the teacher of the nation (Zhalelovich, 2011; Tlegenovich, 2019).

Critiquing Kazakh society and thus contributing to its advancement, the poet Abai, who elevated honest labour and education, was a great man not only in his time; his

ideas are important and relevant even today. The teachings of the thinker could be reconsidered and utilised in the upbringing of descendants. K. Kasenova (2016) describes measures taken for this purpose as follows: “We must glorify Abai entirely. Now times have changed, the worldview has changed. Khakim has a spiritual motto, which is – the education of a complete person” (Wendt *et al.*, 2021). A soul imbued with complete human learning spiritually purifies itself. Now this teaching is imparted in eight universities of the country. Now the task is to purify the Kazakh youth with Abai’s ‘education of a complete person. “This teaching, which is absent in the West and the East, is accessible only through Abai”.

CONCLUSIONS

Abai, who lived in the Kazakh steppe in the 19th century, was an outstanding thinker of his time. Since the Kazakhs were primarily engaged in animal husbandry, his ideas about the economy related to livestock and property. There is no distinct religiosity, fanaticism, or ideology in Abai’s works, but he cannot be called either an atheist or a deist. From his perspective, the population should be armed not only with religious but also academic knowledge. Abai’s awareness of the importance of the educational institution and the value of knowledge primarily developed in the humanitarian field. His teachings evolved in the realm of social sciences: philosophy, psychology, literature, poetry, history, and others. The thinker condemned negative human traits such as laziness and cowardice, noting that there were many such people in Kazakh society. Abai sees a way out of the situation in knowledge and labour. He is convinced that all the shortcomings and ailments of people are connected with unemployment, ignorance, and the lack of real work. According to the thinker, laziness is not only socially harmful but also has a detrimental impact on spirituality.

Currently, Kazakhstan’s economic situation depends on agriculture and innovative technologies. The president’s task in this situation is to involve youth not in power but in education, to train professionals, and to boost agriculture. Admittedly, the country also needs deputies and akims, but on a national scale, this is not the goal; the goal is to serve one’s people and contribute to their progress. Abai’s teachings lead to this idea, becoming an unchanging support for the Kazakh people and a teacher of the nation.

Therefore, by critiquing Kazakh society and thus contributing to its advancement, the poet Abai, who praised honest labour and education, was a great man not only in his time; his ideas are important and relevant even today. The teachings of the thinker could be reconsidered and utilised in the upbringing of descendants.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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Ідея праці у філософії Абая Кунанбайули

Анотація. Сьогодні питання культурного та економічного розвитку Казахстану стоїть особливо гостро. Конкуренція в туристичному, інвестиційному та аграрному секторах зумовлює необхідність підтримки іміджу країни на міжнародній арені, розвитку внутрішньої економіки та підвищення рівня культури. Шляхи досягнення цих цілей містяться в різноманітних філософських та художніх творах, тому в цій статті розглядаються деякі з них. Об'єктом дослідження є творчість Абая Кунанбайули. Мета дослідження – розглянути філософію праці у творчості Абая як інструмент досягнення добробуту казахським народом. Використано такі методи: біографічний, літературної герменевтики, елементи порівняльного аналізу, культурологічний. У цьому дослідженні розглядається творчість і особистість Абая Кунанбайули в контексті його епохи. Також проаналізовано думки поета про цінність і значення освіти. Філософські диференційовано думки Абая про ідею чесної праці, звернені до свого народу. Результати дослідження показали, що, на думку Абая, освіта і праця необхідні для розвитку суспільства. У свою чергу, лінь і безробіття призводять до бездуховності та економічного занепаду. Практичне значення отриманих результатів полягає в рекомендаціях щодо розвитку економіки Казахстану, виведених на основі аналізу творів Абая Кунанбайули

Ключові слова: критика суспільства; концепція праці; цінність освіти; казахське суспільство; поезія