

**THE ANALYSES OF THE KAZAKH CULTURAL IDENTITY
ON THE BASIS OF ILYAS YESSENBERLIN'S WORK "THE NOMADS:
THE CHARMED SWORD"**

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Summary. The article discusses the issue of Kazakh cultural identity basing on the analysis of literature writing of Kazakh author – Ilyas Yessenberlin. The author in his book “The Nomads: The Charmed Sword” described peculiarities and specificities of Kazakh people’s life of the XV century. The article includes the study of the mode of Kazakhs’ life, their traditions, values and religious beliefs. The role of these components is emphasized in the article since they are essential elements for cultural identity investigation.

Keywords: Kazakh people; nomadic life; national identity; cultural identity; values; beliefs; traditions; religion; intercultural literature.

In the frames of social changes, despite of the fact that there are great number of different investigations about ethnicity identity, the theme is still of huge interest for scientific research. The issue of cultural identity is in the centre of scientific discussions but not only for ethnologists and anthropologists, but also for culturologists, psychologists, sociologists, art experts, politicians.

Although there are not many researches on the issue of cultural identity in the field of Kazakh literature they are not analysed carefully. Meanwhile, metaphorical and symbolic forms in some works of literature reflect quiet serious ideological ideas and take part in the processes of ethnic identity formation.

The issue of cultural identity in literal writings is quiet intricate and multi fold. Literature could be viewed as the medium for cultural identity research. National topics, symbolic images and belles details take the main place among literal devices that express cultural mentality and sphere of concepts.

Literature is seen as a reflection of culture and society, portraying people’s ideas and dreams set in certain time and space frameworks in the most creative and im-

aginary way [1]. It both depicts and inspires social changes and is often treated as a credible source of culture representation. Literary texts should not be, however, treated as documents presenting a society in a truthful and objective way. The world created in works of literature is fictitious, though it provides a broad and vivid context for literary protagonists, whose background, thoughts, attitudes, beliefs, values, habits and everyday life reveal to the reader codes and rules of the real society [2].

The article analyses one of the most famous work of Kazakh writer Ilyas Yessenberlin called “The Nomads: The Charmed Sword”. Actually, Yessenberlin was a truly national Kazakh writer. He described the history, traditions, values and beliefs of Kazakh nation of his time. The masterpiece was translated into English by Oleg Chorakaev.

Yessenberlin’s creative works with great epic power reflect peculiarities of Kazakh cultural identity. He pictures the inherent mindset of Kazakh people, their specific inclinations and antipathies, loyalty and phobias, sensitivity and humor. Based on his trilogy we can determine Kazakh people’s peculiarity of XV century and Kazakhs as a whole.

Yessenberlin describes Kazakh identity in rather multiply way in his works. He presents this concept in all its diversity, from the reigning Khan to the populace, from the sublime heroes to vile knaves. In addition, we should emphasize Yessenberlin's apparent patriotism. Here his love is not one of nationalism and is not limited by the narrow confines of prejudices. It is connected with his desire to know the history of own nation with all contradictions where glory and dignity combined with violence and the struggle for power [2].

The most vivid descriptions of the Kazakh cultural identity are contained in the following fragments:

"Even the Mongols could not force us out of here. Owing to many centuries of our standing the ground the Kazakh tribes and kins, and in particular, we, the Argyns, your flesh and blood, were able to keep intact here, in the middle of the Desht-and-Kipchak steppe, all the great things we have in common: our wisdom, customs, our native tongue, music, and written language. All this is ours, my Kazakh brothers and children!.." [3, p. 54].

and also:

"From olden times the Argyns have had the reputation of being wise and reasonable people. Holding in respect the fighting spirit they have also honored the lofty human mind. They have been the guardians of our age-old music, songs and good customs. In our yurtas one can find old books dealing with the history of our entire people. Is it not of utmost importance for a people which is going to unite itself into one integral whole?!" [3, p. 29].

and:

"So, having enormous areas for nomadic life the Kazakhs got excellent territories for winter camps. True, in those times the wild areas along the rivers, especially the overgrown lake shores abounded in beasts of prey, particularly leopards and tigers. They had to keep their eyes open for their livestock but, being inborn hunters and warriors, the Kazakhs soon chased the predators away from their camps" [3, p. 95].

Yessenberlin presents Kazakh people as the nation of nobility and heroism:

"For whole three days they feasted at khan's headquarters on the occasion of their victory as though the terrible war-

rior had captured the city of Istanbul at least. Such was the custom at the steppe. Towards the end of the feast Abulkhair asked about those who had especially distinguished themselves in that raid in order to share fairly the booty, and above all the women" [3, p. 14].

or:

"I would like to make it so that larks make nests on the backs of the sheep in our country! » said Kassym. But Burunduk didn't take his advice, asserting that incessant war toughened the people, turning them into fearless wolves roving about the steppe day and night in search of worthy prey. Such people weren't afraid of cold or hunger. All the wealth in the world would be brought to their tents. There wouldn't be anyone richer than the Kazakhs and all around would tremble just at hearing their name!" [3, p. 14].

In "The Nomads" Yessenberlin revives martial spirit of Kazakh steppe. It is reflected in images of khans, sultans, byis, warriors who take part in numerous wars and as a rule doughtily defended the honor of his nation:

"Even the Mongols could not force us out of here. Owing to many centuries of our standing the ground the Kazakh tribes and kins, and in particular, we, the Argyns, your flesh and blood, were able to keep intact here, in the middle of the Desht-and-Kipchak steppe, all the great things we have in common: our wisdom, customs, our native tongue, music, and written language. All this is ours, my Kazakh brothers and children!.." [3, p. 54].

and:

"After a while the great warrior Bakhtiyar and other warriors and henchmen came out on to the valley. Seeing the killed wolves and the bulky body of the tiger they began praising to the skies the courage and velour of the khan" [3, p. 71].

The concept of nobility is combined with the ideas of truth and justice that associated with this country:

"In those times even the khan himself had to count with the free-thinking steppe people because he needed the support of the sultans. And there was an unwritten law saying: «You can cut off a man's head but you cannot cut off his tongue" [3, p. 30].

Another example:

“They lined them up in battle formation and themselves came to the khan for justice. Everything was done quietly and according to the long-established ritual so that no-one could find fault with anything. The sultans uttered not one excessive word nor injured someone’s pride. As was the old steppe custom they demanded due payment in blood for the murdered one” [3, p. 54].

The most prominent character in “The Nomads” is Abulkhair. He is presented in the trilogy as the national hero who possesses qualities of Kazakh character such as patriotism, courage, nobility etc. And the Khan is not exalted only but also combines nobility with irony, humor, interest to the life.

“Therefore it was not the mob Abulkhair was reflecting on but on those who lead it, and above all he was thinking of the innumerable sultans although the mob was no less influenced by noble batyrs (warriors), such as Kaptagai, Boribai, Karahodja and others. Every steppe clan had them and their names had become a war-cry. It was through them that the mob was to be guided since a crowd without a leader could suddenly become a fearsome force and sweep away legitimate government like a raging river in flood-time” [3, p. 8].

Abulkhair is popular all over the Kazakh steppe and beyond the pale of the steppe. He is farsighted and independent ruler. Whatever happens in the steppe the force of politics is always directed to liberation from the yoke of Zhungar. Abulkhair’s strength is in his peoples’ support and he appreciates his relations with batyrs and zhirays.

“For the time being I suggest that the bravest and most eloquent of us pick five to ten plain horsemen each and go to the steppe. We must visit every aul and call on its residents to join us. We must explain our intentions to all our people. At first not all of them might follow us immediately but at least they will start thinking. Our call must be simple and clear to any Kazakh, no matter what kin and tribe he is from, whether he is rich or poor, a noble or a commoner: «May the united White Horde live forever” [3, p. 86].

and:

“And what will the other singer, Kotan-Yhyrau, come up with against this unbridled spontaneous force? Will he be able to find a weak spot in the age-old respect for valour and courage which have always been highly esteemed in the steppe? Will the people understand his reasons in this accursed time of trouble when all are going crazy with bloodshed and uninterrupted strife, their wisdom sleeping in their souls and giving way to wild passions?” [3, p. 27].

One of his friends is Olzhabay batyr who doesn’t know what profession he should master. He cannot choose between akyn and warrior. Olzhabay batyr can always find talented akyns, singers, zhyrays. He knew a lot of legend and takes part in all battles:

“Juchi firmly believed in steppe wisdom which says: «May the arms fall off of him who does not care about his relatives” [3, p. 13].

Moreover, the author pictures in the work ordinary people: servants, warriors, shepherds, slaves, batyrs and others. Particular subjects of description are warriors, their skills, their life and so on [4, p. 42]. In the trilogy we can review peculiarities of young warriors’ upbringing. Yesenberlin devotes to the description of this tradition special attention:

“And the small akyn began to sing about the free Kipchaks... [...] Due to toughness, endurance and their excellent horsemanship skills acquired from early childhood and also due to their natural mobility of nomads the Kipchaks, despite their relatively small number were a serious threat to frontier fortresses and at times even to Kiev. Kazgutun-Zhyrau recalled the old songs about these raids and united them into one martial epic on times past...” [3, p. 26].

and:

“Any Kipchak boy learned to sit on horseback holding fas onto its mane even before he began to walk. And when his legs got accustomed to brace the horse’s flanks by themselves his hands were free to draw the bow or throw the lasso at anything turning up in his way.

Right from the saddle, without taking aim could he hit a barely visible bird flying high in the sky and catch a running deer

with his lasso at a distance of one hundred paces within one moment...

He hardly grew up when the curved sword of his granddad was handed to him. Now he was a warrior. His eyesight was as sharp as that of a steppe eagle so he could see a prey from far away in the field and smell danger for miles around. Very few could sneak up imperceptibly to a Kipchak camp”.

In common, the theme of observance of traditions takes prominent place in the trilogy. The essence of every culture is defined by history, its present, and its future [8, p. 10]. Yessenberlin rather accurately described traditions and customs of steppe people of that time. In “The Nomads” we deal with tradition of burial of the deceased, and all the rituals accompanying this process. Given description clarifies the picture of nomadic life of Kazakh people and shows the peculiarities of their cultural identity:

Abulkhair remembered some instructive story of the interment of Khan Munkeh... Unlike that of other peoples the funereal custom of the Mongols has two special features. According to the first one, together with the master his most favorite and devoted slave is interred in a deep burial vault. The latter is placed under the body of his master and buried alive. Half a day later he is disinterred. They let him come to his senses, feed him some and then bury him again. They do it three times and if the slave can still breathe it means that he indeed is closest to the deceased one. Then they grant him freedom from slavery and give him whatever he might ask for since the Mongols deeply believe that he is destined to inherit all the sins of his master. As for the master he, cleared of all responsibility for his past evil deeds, leaves for the nether world...

Then the master’s body is buried for good together with a cauldron stuffed with meat, a big pitcher full of milk and a great number of gold and silver ornaments. The nobler and richer the man was the greater amount of jewelry is buried with him. When he begins to come alive in the nether world the evil spirits that were awaiting him will be distracted by the glitter of the precious things and will not harm his body nor his soul...

The other special feature of the Mongols’ funereal ritual is that no-one is to know if only vaguely where a noble man’s grave is. Immediately after the funeral all the witnesses of the burial are killed and then horse-herds are driven across the steppe to trample down all evidence of the obsequies. It is done not so much as to protect the grave from robbers and thieves but mainly from hostile relatives. Those who did not dare take vengeance during the dead one’s lifetime can do it after his death. Such cases were known not only as regards the Mongols. Not once the succeeding rulers desecrated the graves of their predecessors taking out the bodies of the dead from their tombs and setting them afire. The Mongols dreaded this kind of blasphemy more than anything else in the world...” [7, p. 26].

From the given abstract we can draw out clearly the picture of Kazakh people’s worldview, beliefs and values and can characterize the specific features of their perception. This information helps understand peculiarities of cultural identity of the steppe tribes:

“Different stories are told about these idols. One of them says that the Kipchaks once had a custom according to which on the seventh and fortieth day after the death of a worthy man a dummy was made from wood which was very much like the deceased one. Then they clothed it in the dead one’s most favourite festive clothes and placed it amongst the feasting. The Kipchaks knew that the human soul is immortal and is always near the close relatives of the late. It would certainly be pleased to know that the living had not forgotten about it. Settling in the image of the late the soul feasts with the guests and the relatives must pay all the last respects to it. They hand it a cup filled with koumiss and set before it various viands.

Depending on the late’s age and position sacrifices were made, from one to three heads of different cattle apiece, nine times in all, which amounted to twenty-seven head of sheep and horses.

In memory of the funeral and the ritual repast oblatas and balbals were carved of stone and erected. The idol, or oblatas, cup in hand, was meant to be the late himself and the idols of a lesser size, or balbals,

which surrounded the obatas were supposed to be his close relatives and associates...” [3, p. 23].

The next fragment of the work is also of particular significance for the cultural identity determination:

“The funeral repast on his first-born Shah-Budakh was to be held three days later. According to steppe custom funeral repasts had nothing in common with obsequies. They were conducted by the so-called big toi, or assembly, at which the deceased one was thought to be present. At the same time no grieving was allowed. Instead they had games on horseback and horse-races and held wrestling and singing contests” [3, p. 22].

In common the trilogy presents a gallery of characters who belong to different segments of Kazakh society showing all advantages and disadvantages, virtues and weaknesses:

“Kazgutun-Zhyrau’s tongue was made of flaming red calico and his teeth were sharper than a sword, whereas according to the Kazakhs he himself was less than a rook in size” [3, p. 22].

“The Argyn sultans were clad in black plush caftans with collars of black otter and begirded with golden belts” [3, p. 52].

“Gaif-Jamal, Abulkhair’s seventeen-year-old daughter by his Mangyt wife, got to know rather early in life what the joys of love are about. From time to time such things happened in the Khan’s family and there was nothing special about it but for her falling for the young and strong Sultan Janybek. As was the custom during one of her visits she sent an experienced woman to see him. The beauty invited him to spend together the time remaining till her wedding, which was to take place soon” [3, p. 9].

All nations in literature can find their peculiar cultural characteristics if they want to revile living embodiment and to feel own atmosphere... Yessenberlin imprints Kazakh cultural identity in various scenes though he successfully kept historical character of other people.

Kazakh cultural identity largely formed under the influence of Kazakh nature, the land which is called The Great Kazakh Steppe. It borders the Caspian depression in the west, the Aral Sea in the south, the Ural Mountains in the north and the

Altai Mountains in the east. In the north and north east it gradually turns into the Forest-Steppe. The climate of the Steppe in Kazakhstan is quite extreme. [1] In summer it’s very hot and dry, in winter it could be unbearably chilly. Against the snow-capped mountains of the south and east of Kazakhstan, the Great Steppe has not got much to offer. And yet it has its own beauty and it lets you feel you are part of the eternity:

“In this arid steppe, on the rivers streaming down from the adjacent mountains laid the ancient cities of Sygnak, Sauran, Yassy, Sairam, Arkhuk and the famous Otrar on the Seikhundarya. They had always been surrounded by small suburban settlements inhabited by ill-assorted people. These cities were the cultural, religious and trade centres of the great Kazakh steppe and connected it with all the countries of the East” [3, p. 95].

There is reviled one more peculiarity in the Yessenberlin’s trilogy. On the level with his patriotism and deep attachment to the native land he was opened to the whole world, he was interested in various countries and people. In the text we can find many references to Kazakhs’ neighbours:

“The city could boast palaces which were erected by the best architects brought from India, Rome and China” [3, p. 73].

“The Chinese soldiers were robbing and pillaging on the land of the Uisuns and driving their prisoners away to the heart of China. Both men asked for immediate help” [3, p. 81].

“Each year he would send several extremely large trade caravans to China, Mongolia, India, Tibet and also to Byzantium, Moscow and even Great Novgorod” [3, p. 92].

“The ulus’ center was the city of Almalyk. Iran, Iraq and Transcaucasia were part of the ulus of Tuleh and his son Khulagu with the center in Tebriz” [3, p. 5].

Thus, we can conclude that Kazakh are communicating with many other countries, rapidly developed international relations and as a side effect have been changed their own cultural structure, and consequently cultural identity features under influence of other ethnicities.

Yessenberlin successfully using metaphorical comparison illustrated Mongols

as a 'boiling lava-flow'. This device showed the multinational structure of the Mongol nation:

"The Mongols covered the neighbouring small tribes and nationalities like a boiling lava-flow. All what was not melting in that pot into an integral whole turned into smoke and ashes. The Kirghiz, the Buryats and the Oirots had shared the lot of the Kazakhs" [3, p. 30].

We should note that there many mentions about Russia, its climate, people, rulers, cities those relations with this country in the sage about nomads. Obviously, it is connected with the fact that Russia was the nearest neighbour and the main enemy and support in the same time. Let's cite example of Russian cites mention:

"There Russian cities stood up in their way and an uninterrupted war of many years began with sudden raids, reconciliations, alliances and new raids" [3, p. 26].

The example of Russian rulers description as following:

"Making use of their mobility and relative invulnerability the Kipchaks made yearly raids on their neighbours and first of all on Russia" [3, p. 26].

The internecine wars waged by the numerous Russian princes against one another help the Kipchaks in their raids. On the other hand there is disunity and enmity in the steppe which help the Russian princes make successful raids on the Kipchaks. When the Russian princes unite their forces they deliver the steppe tribes very damaging blows which occur during the rule of Vladimir Monomakh who ruthlessly perfidiously disposes established borders of the Kipchak khans.

"After Monomakh's death the unending war between the eternal nomads and Russians broke out with even greater violence. Soon afterwards the steppe thundered under the hooves of shaggy Mongol horses and the ex-enemies stood together in their way..." [3, p. 27].

Relations with Russia are always of peculiar importance for Kazak khans. Sometimes these two countries are at daggers draw and in other cases the rulers establish friendly relations:

"Sometimes, lost in thought, Janybek was carried away by his long-cherished dream of an alliance with Russia and about the cities on the Volga and Zhaik riv-

ers. But he immediately discarded these thoughts. Russia was too far away from the new Kazakh Khanate, let alone the fact that she herself resembled a not very strong eaglet..." [3, p. 97].

and:

"The Kipchaks paid dearly for their gullibility. When they disbanded their host the Mongols suddenly turned to the Kipchak steppe and stormed through it in a round-up. The surviving Kipchaks fled to the Russian lands and the Crimea and it was only there that they began reconsidering their habitual ways. When death itself advances on one, blood means nothing. The Alans and the Russian appeared to be more close to them in spirit in spite of the Kipchaks having fought against them for about one hundred and fifty years" [3, p. 31].

and also:

"As was the custom in the steppe Khan Abulkhair expressed his condolence in a majestic voice and the moment he finished his speech there came out one of the most influential Kipchak biys, the famous silver-tongued orator Kuba-Biy" [3, p. 53].

Nowadays Yessenberlin is well-known writer. Writer's books have been translated into many languages and published in millions of copies. Anyway, Yessenberlin is 'deep-rooted national writer'. In addition, the author astonishes readers with universality of his knowledge. Primarily it refers to excellent knowledge of history, because "The Nomads" is first of all a historical description of events that took place in Kazakh steppe in XV–XVI centuries. Therefore it is quite natural because world history, and Kazakhstan history in particular, serves as a base for his works.

In his works, Yessenberlin reflects the worldview of nomadic people lived in middle ages in all their diversity and contradiction. This worldview is formed on the basis of middle-aged traditions and customs due to which steppe people live and die for centuries. The theme of death goes through the whole plot of the trilogy. Traditions connected with the burial of deceased are described accurately and exactly:

"Getting on his Tarlankok Khan Abulkhair set out for the Argyn aul of Akzhol-Biy escorted by an especially strengthened detachment of bodyguards. It was the age-old custom of the steppe and the khan had always followed it.

In such cases even enemies expressed their condolences and Khan Abulhair was the best friend and patron of the great warrior Akzhol-Biy" [3, p. 51].

"As was the custom in the steppe Khan Abulhair expressed his condolence in a majestic voice and the moment he finished his speech there came out one of the most influential Kipchak biys, the famous silver-tongued orator Kuba-Biy" [3, p. 53].

Other customs and traditions related to the everyday life of nomad people are shown in details. Let's site an example that is connected with the manner of greeting of a man:

"Less than a month had passed when the leaders and elders of the Kazakh kins raised sultan Kasym on the white mat. As was the custom, they washed him in the milk of forty snow-white horses and proclaimed him their khan..." [3, p. 120].

"That was the way the Kazakhs taught their sons from olden times. Although that kind of schooling was rather unpretentious, the acquired knowledge remained in their memory for the rest of their life and later was passed in all its obviousness on to the succeeding generations.

The young mustn't speak ahead of the senior. This was why the second son of Sultan Janybek, Kasym, kept fidgeting never taking his eyes off his father.

– All right, speak! – Janybek permitted.

– With your permission, father, I would like to share my opinion of the situation with my brothers!

– Speak... speak!..." [7, p. 86].

Moreover, we can present some traditions that are conditioned with nomadic life of steppe people:

"The khan's horde was made up of five large auls and by age-old tradition spent all summer travelling in the Desht-and-Kipchak steppe returning to Orda-Bazar only towards autumn" [3, p. 36].

or:

"– It was an ancient Kazakh tradition to burst into an aul in mourning galloping at full speed lamenting and moaning «O our dearest!" [3, p. 52].

and:

"For the settled population of all Central Asia meat, and above all wool and skins, were as necessary as the articles manufactured by city craftsmen were for the nomads. After all, the goods that were

produced in abundance in the Middle East for the markets of China, India and Europe, the beautiful Khorasan, Bukhara and Khiva carpets, the world-famous skins, wool and cloth, were mostly delivered by nomads" [3, p. 97].

The latter age-old tradition is related to hunting activity of the nomads. The nomadism as we know is closely connected with hunting culture. Their strategies are very diverse, depending greatly upon the local environment; foraging strategies include hunting or trapping big game, hunting or trapping smaller animals. Most hunters combine a variety of these strategies in order to ensure a balanced diet. Hunting culture has a number of traditions which are always observed by any hunter. These traditions are presented in the work of Ilyas Yessenberlin:

"Janybek prepared for hunting very thoroughly. Like all steppe people he liked best the light-footed argamak-horses and hunting birds. One of the most famous kushbegi, the trainers of hunting eagles and hawks in all the steppe of Desht-Kipchak, was a young sultan. Alongside his white yurt there were small black tents and in each one of them there lived a domesticated hawk, eagle, hen-harrier or kestrel. Real hunting birds cannot be kept in the same room..." [3, p. 10].

"There was an age-old tradition by which before hunting a khan sent special messengers to all the sultans and their retinue inviting them to take part in the chase" [3, p. 10].

In the trilogy we can always find some traditions which describe everyday life of Kazakh people. An integral part of Kazakh life is different games that took place not only during holidays but also are held at the funeral. Kazakhs, like other cultural groups, have inherited various forms of entertainment and games from their forefathers [6, p. 20]. As you observe most of these cultural forms are based on life situations and cultural peculiarities: and their intent is to teach succeeding generations to be healthy, strong, brave, smart, observant, resourceful, resilient and humane. Entertainment is one of the branches of Kazakh culture. National games are usually performed on horse-back and are an opportunity to witness the Kazakh's outstanding riding skills:

“The feasting was going on for a whole week now. On the very first day, three hundred choice chargers started their race, or baiga, from Lake Shoindy-Kol situated at the remotest spur of the Argynaty Mountain. First prize went to the famous racer Tarlankok of Khan Abulkhair its rider being the khan’s seven-year-old grandson Muhammed-Sheibani. The moved khan promised to arrange for a special toi to celebrate the important event. After that a wrestling competition began at which Karazhan-Batyr with arms thicker than an old camel’s legs beat all the famed palvans-wrestlers. As was the custom he was given nine presents three times the main present, being a long-legged red Arabian camel from head to tail covered in an expensive Khorasan carpet.

However, at the equestrian competitions no one was able to pull down the Karakipchak Koblandy-Batyr. For some time, equal to the period between two milkings of a mare, the famous Argyn military leader Akzhol-Biy was offering resistance to him. However, at the end, his horse could not stand Koblandy-Batyr’s onslaught, settled on its knees and the referees recorded a defeat.

Besides the horse-races they had camel’s races, women’s wrestling and boys’ competitions and it was only after these events that the most exciting and grand moment came – a competition of akyns, or narrator-songsters. It was fraught with many perils for the powerful and the strong, since from olden times in the steppe akyns were allowed to ridicule the weaknesses and vices of all people without taking into account their genealogy and riches, and true akyns enjoyed their right in full measure. This time the competition promised to be especially poignant because Asan-Kaigy was to judge it” [3, p. 24].

In Kazakhstan Islam is an important factor in shaping cultural self-identification and spiritual identity. Being one of the forms of ethnic identity, Islam participates in ethnic consolidation. Islam is the most widely spread religion among the Kazakh population [5, p. 27]. The symbol of Koran is often found in the trilogy:

“I would like to swear on the Koran! – exclaimed Akkozy and swiftly took out from her bosom a small black-bound book. – Here is my Koran, my Father Khan.

Holding this book of God over my head I swear to you and to everyone here to remain a widow for good!” [3, p. 38].

– «Oblige thy neighbour!» – the Koran says and I am ready to help you. But then I have two conditions...” [3, p. 68].

“Later, after raising the Koran over their heads and holding the other hand on their chests, they vowed eternal friendship and loyalty to each other. But Sultan Kasym was sad. This war didn’t harbour anything good for the Kazakhs...” [3, p. 114].

Islam is well-rooted among the Kazakh nobles – khans and sultans. Ritual practices of different religions consist of the same ritual actions – adoration, purification and enlightenment [5]. For Kazakhs holy adoration places are the burial places of their ancestors. It is considered that such places are protected by God against bad fortune. Caravans in heath stayed for the night near such places. People swear to the loyalty and truth of what they say near the graves:

“It was then that the miracle which once had helped out Baty occurred for the second time. In fact Khan Berkeh adopted Islam from the hands of the caliph himself receiving from him as a gift the Koran and His Sacred Highness’s attire” [3, p. 6].

“If I become the ruler of Samarkand I will never forget about your help. I can swear on the Koran that I will be the same as your son to you! Is not my dear Rabia-Sultan-Begim the closest human being to me in this world of ours?” [3, p. 68].

– Here is the Koran and here is a piece of bread on which I give you an oath of allegiance. From now on my life is in your hands and you can do anything you like with me if I break my oath!...” [3, p. 68].

“People say you have sworn on the Koran and bread never to get married again and I thank you for this memory of me, – he said. – Even when black soil has taken my remains I will not forget your faithfulness” [3, p. 94].

As we know, the word “Kazakh” is derived from an ancient Turkic word meaning “independent; a free spirit”, reflecting the Kazakhs’ nomadic horseback culture. From the description of Kazakhs’ life we can conclude that the concept of liberty is fundamental for the nomads:

“He spent still longer spells of time in cities and the native Kipchak nomads were growing still more discontent. They were

contemptuous of the settled way of living preferring to lead their age-old free life in the steppe. Even those following his track into the cities had to give up their customs, traditions and mores and become a kind of appendage in the long-adjusted economy of Maverannahr” [3, p. 7].

The Kazakh nomads in Yesenberlin’s work are described also as wise, thinking people. The wisdom of nomads established a mechanism for mutual assistance:

“But why, the impram, does this faceless steppe mob, accept their questionable wisdom with such a great delight? Can it be that they are right and there is power in their wisdom? They aspire for the unification of the Kazakh steppe which is fraught with the split of his Horde. Well, let’s see which is stronger, the wise parables of Genghiz Khan or the songs of the ragged zhyraus!...” [3, p. 44].

Many peculiarities of Kazakh cultural identity discussed above are reflected not only in everyday behaviour of people but also in the literature and history. Nobility and patriotism, heroism and courage, truth and justice, independence and free spirit characterize Kazakh people in literature. In our opinion, this approach makes the process of study literature one of the important subjects in culturological research and plays crucial role in the field of Kazakh identity examination. The study of such examples of identity in belles letters works helps understand own attachment to the ethnicity, nation and culture. Modern Kazakh society needs some impressive examples to rely on because in the era of globalization, especially in multicultural societies, people tend to lose their identity or be at a loss under the influence of other cultures. We suppose that by including the

analysis of Kazakh cultural characters in literal writings to the educational program as the significant element we provoke stable purposeful Kazakh cultural identity formation according to the Concept of Education Development in the Republic of Kazakhstan [6]. As we know, the concept offers a set of principles on the basis of which education should be formed. And the idea of national and cultural identity establishment correspond to the principle of reflective self-regulation of the concept.

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