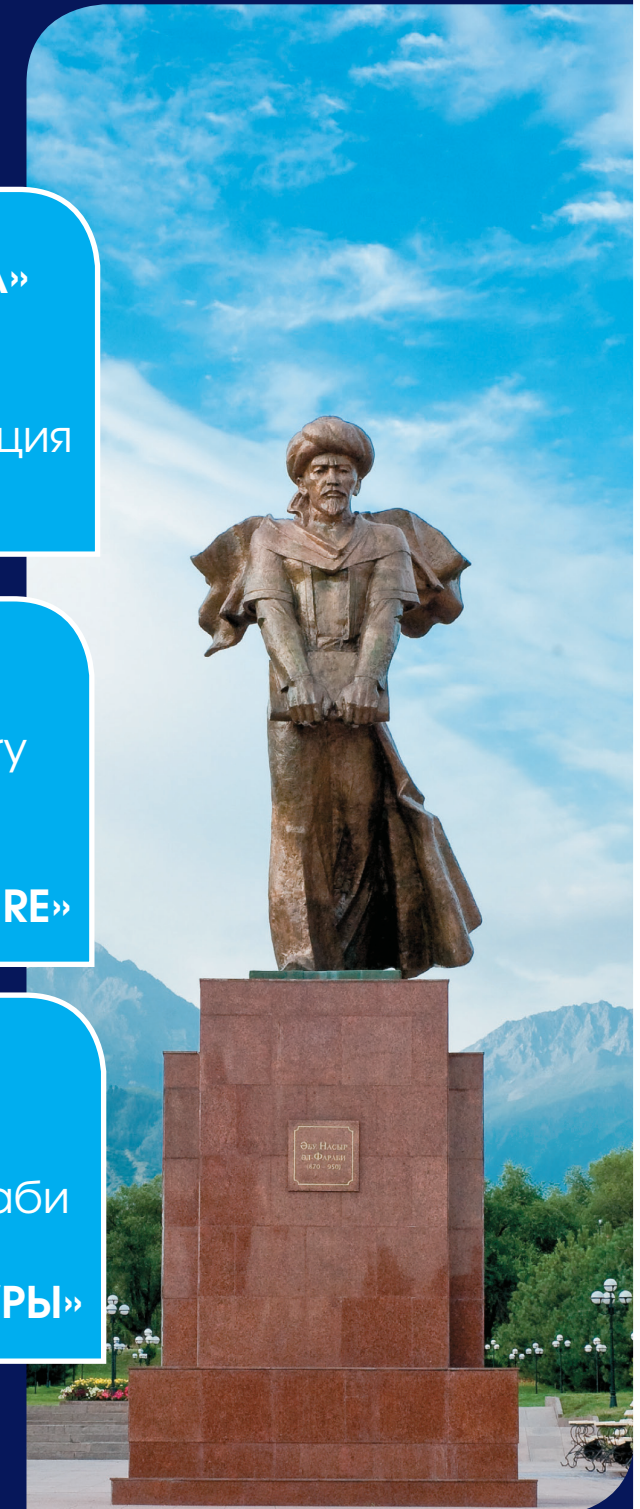


**«ӘЛ-ФАРАБИ ФИЛОСОФИЯСЫ
ӘЛЕМДІК МӘДЕНИЕТ АЯСЫНДА»**
Әбу Насыр әл-Фарабидің
1150 жылдығына арналған
халықаралық ғылыми конференция
МАТЕРИАЛДАРЫ

MATERIALS
international conference
dedicated to the 1150th anniversary
of Abu Nasr al-Farabi
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IN THE CONTEXT OF WORLD CULTURE»**

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В КОНТЕКСТЕ МИРОВОЙ КУЛЬТУРЫ»**



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ФИЛОСОФИЯ ЖӘНЕ САЯСАТТАНУ ФАКУЛЬТЕТІ



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Ғылыми қоғамдастыққа және әл-Фараби мұрасымен тереңірек танысуға ықыласты көпшілікке ұсынылады.

Автордың редакциясымен шығарылды.

FROM AESTHETICS TO POLITICS: A REVIEW OF MODERN INTERNATIONAL AL-FARABI DISCOURSE

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The article seeks to provide an account of modern al-Farabi studies from the international perspective and to point themes that can be of the common interest to Kazakhstan's al-Farabi scholar's community. We present a brief comparison of Kazakhstan's school of al-Farabi studies and international Farabi discourse of the last half century. The main part of the article is devoted to a review of a number of selected international Farabi scholars' works that were published in the 1970-2010-s. The topics covered range from aesthetics to politics, from poetics to formal logic, from philosophy of language to philosophy of religion, and from community studies to globalization issues. We draw a conclusion that an international portrait of a modern Farabi scholar conjoins representatives of different generations, sometimes with opposite views and scientific interests, with their specific Eastern or Western cultural backgrounds. We reckon that such universal culture integration agents as was Abu Nasr al-Farabi are especially valuable to the humanity because they allow to expand the ties of international scientific community as it is happening today, in al-Farabi's 1150th anniversary year.

Introduction

In the modern world, which has long shifted from industrialism to post-industrialism and from modern to postmodern discourse, our cultural heritage still occupies very important place. Outstanding medieval philosopher Abu Nasr Al-Farabi has made significant contribution to the formation of the scientific picture of the world. He set the framework for the development of sciences and this rationalist approach has been since continuously elaborated by Islamic as well as European philosophers. Al-Farabi's teachings and writings remain highly relevant to current philosophical and multidisciplinary discussions.

The Kazakh school of Farabi studies originated back in the 1960s. The scholars that had contributed to the origin of the Kazakh school of Farabi studies represent various areas of theoretical research. Akin to the Second Teacher's universalism a cohort of multidifield studies conducted by Kazakhstani philosophers and theologians, geologists and translators, diplomats and orientologists, writers and poets – A. Mashani, A. Kasymzhanov, A. Alimzhanov, A. Derbisali and many others – have facilitated the development of a coherent multidisciplinary approach. As a result, over the past several decades a holistic vision of the role and place of Farabi's heritage as well as fundamental principles of research, systematization and interpretation of his teachings were formed in Kazakhstani science.

Taking a broader view at al-Farabi studies we can surely state that within the international scientific community of the second half of the XXth century, the spiritual heritage of the Second Teacher has been broadly studied and the interest continued to grow. Thus, while back in 1975 the events dedicated to the 1100th anniversary of al-Farabi were held in three main centers, Alma-Ata, Moscow and Baghdad, now, almost half a century later, profound research is being carried out within special research programs in a number of Central Asian, Middle Eastern, European and American universities and research centers. Concurrently there are many individual and independent scholars around the world specializing in medieval philosophy, history of Arab philosophy, cultural and interdisciplinary doing their research on al-Farabi heritage.

International al-Farabi discourse can be characterized by a highly thorough approach to the studies of Farabi's writings. It is important to mention that most of the Western scholars have a proper linguistic background to examine the original texts and comments by medieval Islamic philosophers. At the same time, many Eastern scholars have the opportunity to conduct research, teach and publish their works both in Arab countries and in the West – Europe and the USA. However, unlike the Kazkhstani school of al-Farabi studies, the international account looks much more discrete and divided into many separately examined subfields.

Review of modern international al-Farabi discourse

In this article we provide an overview of selected al-Farabi research conducted by Middle Eastern, European and American scholars in 1970-s – 2010-s. The topics covered literally range from aesthetics to politics not to mention poetics, philosophy of language, formal logic, philosophy of religion, etc.

Thus, one of the most acknowledged experts in the field of medieval philosophy, Islamic and Arabic studies, an Iraqi-American scientist **Muhsin Mahdi** (1926-2007) has devoted his efforts to the restoration, translation and editing of many works of al-Farabi that were previously unknown to the world community. The importance of his meticulous work with the original texts can hardly be overestimated. His monograph "Al-Farabi: the Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle" [1], first published in 1969, was reprinted 33 times and published in four languages. The author gives a profound analysis of the works of al-Farabi and presents the Second Teacher as an outstanding thinker who sought to lay new foundations for understanding religion and its relationship to political philosophy.

Another acknowledged Farabi scholar, professor **Majid Fakhri** (born 1923), expert in medieval Islamic philosophy, has taught in Lebanon, Great Britain, and the USA. He is author of the repeatedly published "History of Islamic Philosophy" [2], as well as a survey monograph devoted to the study of the life and works of the Second Teacher, "Al-Farabi: the founder of Islamic Neoplatonism, his life, works and influence" [3]. In his book M. Fakhri stresses the importance of Farabi as the main link between Greek and Arab philosophy, as well as between the Muslim East and the Latin West. The author provides his account of the historical significance of al-Farabi philosophical heritage, his influence on such thinkers as al-Ghazali, Ibn Badj, Ibn Rushd, and on Eastern and Western philosophy in general.

In the 1980s and 90s the interest of Middle Eastern philosophers to the works of al-Farabi shifted towards the philosophy of language and to his interpretation of the foundations of formal logic previously outlined by Aristotle. Thus, professor of the American University of Beirut **Fuad Haddad** in his work "Al-Farabi Theory of Communication" [4] studies Farabi's views on logic and its relation to grammar. Another researcher of the Middle East, author, translator and editor of a number of scientific books and articles, professor **Shukri Abed** in his monograph "Aristotelian Logic and the Arabic Language in the Works of Al-Farabi" [5] considers Farabi's teaching through the prism of language as an instrument of logic and logic as a tool for analyzing language. As it turned out, many of the provisions expressed by al-Farabi back in the X-th century remained relevant and applicable to modern philosophical issues. Thus, Sh. Abed demonstrates that according to Farabi (and quite in the spirit of modern theories of linguistics), language is not built within the language, as the Arab logicians argued. Many factors influence its formation, but in fact it is the philosophical meanings of the terms that are the most original and essential meanings. Sh. Abed shows that al-Farabi's analysis of some aspects of the Arabic language (for example, connectives; the system of Arabic verbs in

relation to Aristotelian logic; the elusiveness of the present tense and other features of the Arabic verb system) demonstrates that Arabic, like any natural language, corresponds to the universal logical structures, and natural languages are only their concrete expression [5].

Another fundamental study on al-Farabi was published in 1991 by the British philosopher **Salim Kemal**. Studying Kant and Nietzsche, S. Kemal devoted one of his studies to the problem of reflecting the Hellenistic logical tradition in the medieval Muslim interpretation of poetics and aesthetics. Asking the question whether poetics can be considered a logically consistent form of argumentation, S. Kemal in his book "The Poetics of Al-Farabi and Avicenna" [6] conducts a historiographic study and analyzes how al-Farabi and Avicenna substantiated the logical and moral power of poetic discourse and why they considered poetry as a form of discourse that can be perceived logically, and therefore as universally true. In his further research, S. Kemal examined how al-Farabi, Avicenna and Ibn Rushd interpret the concept of poetic truth (beauty) and fair relations between people in society (virtue).

A comprehensive comparative analytical study on the history of Arabic logic was conducted by **Joep Lameer**, professor of Leiden University (Netherlands), and translator from Persian and Arabic. J. Lameer examined the problem of paradigm in Aristotle's and al-Farabi's analytics. As was pointed by a famous British Farabi scholar I. Netton, Lameer's monograph "Al-Farabi and Aristotelian Syllogistics: Greek Theory and Islamic Practice" [7] "is a major work obligatory for everyone who studies Arab logic". In his studies professor J. Lameer also touched such topics as history of Islamic law, theology and political philosophy of Islam.

The heyday of Farabi studies in the United States in the mid-1990s was also marked by **Herbert Davidson's** book "Al-Farabi, Avicenna and Averroes on Intelligence: Their Cosmology, Theory of Active Intelligence and Theory of Human Intelligence" [8]. This research is supported by a deep and qualitative analysis of the original texts, both Greek and early Arabic, and of some medieval studies on the problem of intelligence. The Journal of Neoplatonic Studies has called the book by G. Davidson an "anthology of original texts which must be studied by researchers of medieval philosophical and religious thought" [9].

Another study which fellow philosophers consider "the best book on philosophy of al-Farabi in English" is the book by American philosopher and political scientist **Christopher Colmo** "Breaking with Athens. Al-Farabi as Founder" [10]. Referring to certain aspects of al-Farabi's philosophical doctrine C. Colmo argues that the Second Teacher was not a follower of Plato or Aristotle in the conventional sense. Moreover, C. Colmo argues that Farabi in his treatise "On the Achievement of Happiness" has conducted a final break with antiquity, and built a new political philosophy as "the philosophy of achievement of happiness".

Among relatively recent research studies of the legacy of the Second Teacher is a book by an American philosopher **Joshua Parens** "Islamic Philosophy of Virtuous Religions: an Introduction to the Teachings of Al-Farabi" (2006) [11]. J. Parens claims that today al-Farabi's philosophical findings are more relevant than ever. He notes that the study of al-Farabi's ideas should be carried out in the wide context of the Islamic political world, with the themes of war, tyranny, religion and world rule that are so familiar to it. Parens emphasizes that in his treatise "On Achieving Happiness", al-Farabi questions what kind of government and religion are needed to achieve the Islamic aspirations for its universal acknowledgement. And he concludes that, while questioning whether more than one virtuous religion is possible or not, the Second teacher suggests that the solution is not to declare all religions equal. "On the contrary, al-Farabi does not separate religion from politics; he does not hesitate to declare one religion higher than the other. Farabi is rather interested in educating his reader" [12]. And such education, in J. Parens opinion, is especially important today for both Muslims and non-Muslims.

Georgios Steiris, a Greek scholar and expert in ancient and medieval philosophy, in his works turns to the issues of globalization. G. Steiris points out that al-Farabi drew attention to such political phenomena as the superiority of political philosophy over religion and possibility of providing philosophers with the implementation of global governance of society. Moreover, in his article "Globalization in Early Arab Philosophy" [13] G. Steiris argues that while being a supporter of the

early form of globalization, al-Farabi criticized the city as a form of political association, precisely because it presupposes tyranny. The author states that re-evaluating al-Farabi's reasoning about the difficulties of creating a global political association can be useful for the modern audience as well.

Another interesting research that draws a parallel with modernity is presented by a young American political scientist and comparative scholar **Alexander Orwin**. In his monograph "Redefining the Muslim Community: Ethnicity, Religion and Politics in the Thought of Alfarabi". A. Orwin notes that for the history of political philosophy, al-Farabi is unique for his extensive rhetoric on the topic of nation, or *umma*. At the same time, the term *umma* means both the Islamic religious community as a whole and the various ethnic formations that make up this community, such as Turks, Persians and Arabs, etc. A. Orwin bases his statements on the study of al-Farabi's political writings, logical commentaries, his encyclopedic work as "The Book of Music" and other treatises. In the preface to his book, A. Orwin points out that "the ties and tensions between ethnic and religious *ummas* that al-Farabi explored in his time, persist today in ongoing political and cultural disputes among different nationalities in Islam. Al-Farabi has anticipated the modern concept of "Islamic civilization" which emphasizes culture at least as much as religion [14]. A. Orwin argues that Al-Farabi advocated a new *umma* that would be less rigid and more creative than the usual Muslim community, and therefore less inclined to unite various ethnic and religious groups into one integral structure by force [15]. He concludes that al-Farabi's proposed a reasonable combination of cultural pluralism, religious flexibility and political prudence that can serve as guideline for reducing of intercommunal strife in a region that continues to experience these problems today.

To sum up this brief review of the modern international al-Farabi discourse we would like to reiterate that the interest in spiritual heritage of the second Teacher continues to grow over the years. Modern comparative and interdisciplinary research makes it possible to assess from a new angle the foundations that he laid down in his teaching over one thousand years ago and to apply them to the analysis of contemporary realities. The results of these studies are published as monographs and scientific journal articles. They are as well as updated on a regular basis in the thematic sections of Encyclopaedia Iranica, the Oxford and the Stanford Encyclopedias of Philosophy and other editions.

An international portrait of a modern Farabi scholar can be hardly compiled into one solid image though: it conjoins representatives of different generations, sometimes with opposite views and scientific interests, and with specific Eastern or Western cultural backgrounds. That is why such universal teachers and culture integration agents as Abu Nasr al-Farabi are so valuable to the humanity: these never-ending efforts and achievements reveal the potential of international scientific community to expand their ties as it is happening today, in 2020.

The fact that a significant number of international scientific conferences and other events were initially planned around the world – including such countries as Kazakhstan, Greece, India, Iran, UAE, Portugal, Russia, USA, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, Turkey, etc. – for al-Farabi's 1150th anniversary year, verifies the importance of cultural integration and reiterates the strength of traditions in the modern philosophical.

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