

**DOI: 10.7596/taksad.v9i4.2871**

**Citation:** Vaskiv, M., & Anisimova, L. (2020). Cultural Self-identification in Terms of Bilingualism by Chingiz Aitmatov. *Journal of History Culture and Art Research*, 9(4), 276-285. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.7596/taksad.v9i4.2871>

## **Cultural Self-identification in Terms of Bilingualism by Chingiz Aitmatov**

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### **Abstract**

The article deals with a phenomenon of bilingualism of Soviet national writers, who created their works both in their mother-tongue and the Russian language, and exceptionally in Russian. The brightest example of such kind of an artist is Kyrgyz classical writer of the second part of the 20th century Chingiz Aitmatov. The aim of our research is to define Chingiz Aitmatov's cultural self-identification in a situation of bilingualism in his native Kyrgyzstan during Soviet times. The function of the Russian language and culture for Chingiz Aitmatov's creative works, and author's reflection concerning such issue as Russian culture as a mediator in familiarizing of small nations of the USSR with the world cultural heritage have been also studied. Aitmatov considered Russian language as a "no compromise one" for USSR nations and small peoples in common Soviet informational space, particularly literary, in the process of integration to the global political, economic, and cultural heritage. At the same time, he put Russian culture in one cohort with the leading world cultures. According to Aitmatov, the Russian cultural space had a great influence on the development of Soviet nations of Central Asia and became a mediator in a process of integration of small nations into the global cultural space. The Russian language was a helpful tool for getting acquainted with the ancestry of world cultures.

**Keywords:** Chingiz Aitmatov, Russian and Kyrgyz languages, bilingualism, intermediate language and culture, cultural imperialism, self-identification.

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## **Introduction**

Soviet Union as an empire got together into its structure various ethnic groups regarding their economic, political, cultural, and religious specific traits. The majority of European, Transcaucasian, and partially Asian colonial nations of Russian empire mentally were ready for creating modern states, what was starkly illustrated by Poles, Finns, Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians. The struggle for independence was held actively by the Ukrainians, the Georgians, the Azerbaijani, the Belarusians, the Kazan Tatars, the Bashkirs, the Kazakhs and others. But for many Asian ethnic groups, the advent of Soviet power to their lands was at the same time the advent of civilization, literacy, and contemporary culture.

Russia was a metropole, and the Russian language became “the gates” for changes, that empowered many peoples of the Soviet Union to take a step from very nearly “primitive society” to contemporary one in a measure of the 20th-century forms of being, which were called “advanced” (“peredovoj” in Russian pronunciation) in comparison with other variants of socialism. That is why big and small nations of Central Asia (including Kyrgyz), Siberia, Far East hold the advent of imperialistic Russian power and culture predominately as a positive event in their own history.

Political and cultural domination in the Soviet Union, coupling together in one empire a great number of heterogeneous ethnic groups leads to an absolute and oppressive domination of the Russian language in a sphere of communication, that was the resumption of traditions started in a time of the Russian empire.

Any writer as a representative of colonized people (especially from small ethnic group without developed authorial art), in order to make a name, and to be of interest to a big number of readers, to win a renown, often had to translate and publish his works in Russian, sometimes had to write in it primarily. Similar situation was a commonplace in the Russian empire. It could be proved by the examples of works written in the Russian language by Ukrainian writers Yevhen Hrebinka, Mykhailo Starytsky, Volodymyr Vynnychenko, and partially Taras Shevchenko, by Crimean Tatar author Ismail Gasprinskiy and others. In the USSR after the World War II writing in Russian became a mass tendency among Asian authors, who made a glory at the same time for national and all-union literatures. For example, such Asian authors as Kazakh poet Olzhas Suleimenov, Tajik poet, playwright, and novelist Timur Zulfiqorov, Uzbek writer Timur Pulatov, Nivkhs writer Vladimir Sangi wrote predominantly in Russian, both in Chukchi and Russian created his works Yuri Rytkeu, in their native language and Russian published own writing such European authors as Belarus prose writer and playwright Vasil Bykov, Moldavian writer Ion Drutse and many others. The cohort also includes a prominent Kyrgyz writer Chingiz Aitmatov.

## **Methods**

Except such basic scientific methods of research, as analysis, synthesis, analogy, comparison, generalization, description, we also used the specific literary critical methods. For dealing with information about the development of Soviet colonial literatures and creative works by Chingiz Aitmatov the culture-historical method was used. With the help of hermeneutic method, the Kyrgyz writer’s attitude to the role of native and Russian languages and cultures for his own creative works and the development of Kyrgyz as well as other national Soviet literatures and cultures were studied. Comparative method gave us an opportunity to define some statements and ideas with the help of comparison of different critics’ points of view according to the problematics of our research. In addition, we used the method of synchronous diachronic analysis while dealing with the reception of Aitmatov’s life and works in different socio-cultural situations in different times.

## Discussion

Since the Soviet times, a great corpus of literary-critical texts devoted to the peculiarities of Chingiz Aitmatov's works has been created. In 2013 the Institute of Language and Literature named after Ch. Aitmatov at the National Academy of Sciences of Kyrgyz Republic published in Russian language a monograph "Chingiz Aitmatov: a Man and the Universe" (Akmataliev, 2013), devoted to 85th anniversary of a birth of a great Kyrgyz writer. The author A. Akmataliev in the preface about an overview of Aitmatov's literary heritage cites only the works by Soviet literary critics K. Asanaliev, M. Azizov, G. Gachev, V. Voronov, A. Isenov, V. Korin, A. Lebedeva, V. Levchenko, P. Mirza-Ahmedova, L. Ukubaeva, and others, published from late 60s till 80s of 20<sup>th</sup> century. But it is also important to fill in the lacune and make an overview of critical works about Chingiz Aitmatov in the English language.

An American professor Iraj Bashiri (2008), one of the leading scholars in the fields of Central Asian studies, wrote several papers about Aitmatov's life and works. He also reflects on his personal meeting with Aitmatov and author's impact on Kyrgyz culture and national identity formation (Bashiri, 1999).

Nina Kolesnikoff (1999) studies the mythological motifs and combination of mythological and realistic narratives in Aitmatov's major writings. Haber (2003) focused on the use of both native and Soviet myths in writer's works and analyses the phenomenon of magical realism of such "non-Russian Russian writers" as Chingiz Aitmatov and Fazil Iskander. Qualin (1996) devoted his dissertation to the famous "non-Russian" Soviet writers Timur Pulatov and Aitmatov in a broad context of Central Asian, Russian and Soviet cultures. Josef Mozur (1994) examined Kyrgyz and Russian cultural interplay and symbolism in Aitmatov's writings.

In the article by Karabulatova, Sayfulina, Zamalieva, & Niyazova (2015) the importance of literary heritage of Aitmatov for the world literature development is studied. The special attention is paid to the translations of the author's writings into other languages.

Rashmi Doraiswamy (2005) deals with the Chingiz Aitmatov's works, written in the Post-Soviet conditions of 1990 s, particularly she focuses on their reception by European and Russian readers and professional critics.

Coombs (2011) analyses *The Day Lasts More than a Hundred Years* by Aitmatov from a perspective of postcolonial theory and states that it is an anti-colonial novel, because it criticizes the Soviet imperialism, based on the ideology of bilingualism.

The issues of ethnic identity and the nationality in Soviet literature were studied by Tomas Venclova. In 1988, he ironically said, that "(D)espite the multitude of taboos in official Soviet culture, the taboo against serious discussions of the national question has always been, shall we say, "the first among equals" (1988, p. 319). As an example of an important event that started to break this taboo was an article by Aitmatov in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* in 1986, where a well-known Kyrgyz writer states that disappearance of even one small people and language signifies impoverishment of the world.

The recent survey by Britta Korth (2005) concerning the linguistic situation in Kyrgyz Republic, based on her personal experience there from 1988 to 2003, proves that the Russian language is still a dominating one in Kyrgyzstan. Colonial language is the language of power and those who speak in it belong to a privileged group. So, multi- and bilingualism in Post-Soviet countries is a result of a language policy and ideology of Russianness. B. Korth says that in allusion to Aitmatov's character Mankurt (unthinking slave) from *The Day Lasts More than a Hundred Years*, "the Russified Kyrgyz are also called mankurty" (2005, p.121).

The aim of our research is to define Chingiz Aitmatov's cultural self-identification in the situation of bilingualism in his native Kyrgyzstan during Soviet times. The primary tasks are to study

the function of Russian language and culture for Chingiz Aitmatov's creative works, and author's reflection concerning such issue as Russian culture as a mediator in familiarizing of small nations of the USSR with the world cultural heritage.

### ***The Russian language in Chingiz Aitmatov's life and works***

In comparison with the writers listed earlier in the Introduction section, who wrote more in Russian than in their native language, Chingiz Torekulovich Aitmatov was different because he spoke Russian from the early childhood. His Kyrgyz father, a high-ranking political figure, used the Russian language very often, and his Tatar mother also knew Russian very well. Moreover, he moved to Moscow with his parents at the age of 6 and went to school there. As a result, Aitmatov learnt the Russian language organically and perfectly (Ukubaeva, 2018, pp. 60, 62). After two and a half years he returned to a native Kyrgyz village Sheker, where he became utterly absorbed in a Kyrgyz language, folklore, way of life and half-nomad existence (Ibraimov, 2019, pp. 20–32). It was here where he received his first "honorarium" (a big stake of freshly cooked mutton) as an interpreter for Kyrgyz collective farmers and Russian-speaking veterinary (Aitmatov, 1988, pp. 27–29; Aitmatov, 2018, pp. 388–392). Chingiz Aitmatov had warm repeated recollection about this fact during his life. His professional life and education helped him to acquire both languages almost perfectly.

Ch. Aitmatov wrote his first works in his native language and then translated them into Russian, sometimes even over years of a time the works in the Kyrgyz language were published. Aitmatov got real fame, it is not an overstatement to say – a global fame, in 1959, after the translation of his tale *Jamila* into French by Louis Aragon. So, it could also depose a fact that in order to get a wide range of readers an author shouldn't be limited by a language of a small and little-known in the world nation, even though it be his native Kyrgyz language. Aleksander Tvardovsky, an editor-in-chief of a leading Soviet literary magazine *Novyi Mir*, gave him an important tip: in order to avoid excessive criticism from republican overcautious persons, an author should primarily publish his work in the Russian language in Moscow (Aitmatov, 2018, Pp. 462–463). And Chingiz Aitmatov started to follow the advice from 1966, a year when his novel *Farewell, Gul'sary!* got out of print. He wrote and published his works in Russian, and only after that an author's translation into the Kyrgyz language was made. "The language change – partially motivated by greater conservatism in the Kirghiz literary establishment – also signaled Aitmatov's growing concern with problems whose implications transcend the confines of his nature republic" (Mozur, 1995, p. 38), states J.P.Mozur. He also says that for Aitmatov one of the major reason for such decision, in 1966, "to write in Russian rather in Kirghiz was the fear that his controversial works would never see the light of day in Kirghizstan" (Mozur, 1995, p. 6).

He had not learnt other languages, though he often visited foreign countries in a Soviet period of his life, became a diplomat, and after a breakup of the USSR for months Aitmatov lived in Benelux countries, France, Germany, and he also visited Turkey many times.

For a long time, Chingiz Aitmatov's works were an ideal example of a successful combination of Soviet ideologemes about a leading role of the Russian language and culture, and at the same time of all-round development of national cultures. In theoretical and journalistic thoughts, he was also – especially at the beginnings – within the demands of these ideologemes. Probably, it was an evidence of writing style evolution, it is also likely that only with time Aitmatov managed to express his thoughts, hidden for others. Nobody knows for sure. The point is that, in general, the author followed the instructions of Soviet ideology, but always moved beyond them for the measure which allowed him not to get in a big trouble.

J. P. Mozur in a Preface to his "Parables from the Past: the Prose Fiction of Chingiz Aitmatov" says that the readers admired Aitmatov and looked upon him "as a defender of the Soviet Union's non-Russian cultures, capable of getting his message through despite the numerous layers of censorship" (Mozur, 1995, p. ix). The same idea we could find in Iraj Bashiri's work "Kyrgyz National Identity":

“Aitmatov communicated this sensitive information skillfully and through the use of symbols, the nightmare of the Soviet censors” (Bashiri, 1999). Indeed, the major themes in Aitmatov’s fiction were the juxtaposition of prerevolutionary values and revolutionary moral relativism, the struggle with despotism, the need to protect from the arrogant in satiety of the powerful – reveal the party’s failures and negative sides of life in the Soviet state” (Mozur, 1995, p. 4).

The majority of his key published works (*Jamila, Face to Face, Duishen / The First Teacher, Farewell, Gul’sary!, The White Steamship, The Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years, The Place of the Skull*) were accompanied with socio-political polemics both in Kyrgyzstan and Moscow. The author was accused of his departure from a general line of the Communist Party. From his childhood Chingiz Aitmatov had a small love to Soviet Union, because his father was repressed by it. An opposition (“fronderstvo”) in 1960–70s (and moreover in 80s) surpassed a freethinking in 1950s. Reasoning for this fact there is a consistent question – was it an evolution of views or at last in the 80s it was allowed to speak about the things that haunted people as far as back 1950s? Nobody could give the correct answer, as well as to solve unambiguously the problem of international language and cultural views.

“Every contemporary Soviet culture is grounded on two sources: own national tradition and a tradition of Russian culture, which we get acquainted with from childhood <...> Resources of Russian language – exhaustless. When I write in Russian, I feel <...> that I express myself in a very special and unique way” (Aitmatov, 1988, pp. 35-36). In 1972 many Ukrainian, Estonian, Lithuanian, Azerbaijanian writers and critics would not agree with such Aitmatov’s words.

It sounds almost mandatory, but therewith a writer also highlights the singularity and importance of the national languages: “Certainly, any other language of our country has the huge facilities, including my native Kyrgyz. Singular and untranslatable utterances existed in it. ... When I create my works in Kyrgyz language, I feel again a uniqueness of my writing style, a uniqueness of the way I express my own Self” (Aitmatov, 1988, p. 36). We can often observe such ambivalence in writer’s articles, speeches, and interviews.

With increasing frequency over time, Aitmatov brings a focus not only on the uniqueness of a national language but also on a substantial necessity to maintain and develop it. “Language of any nation is a unique phenomenon, created by the people’s genius, and its disappearance causes only losses <...> Those times when languages were created definitely completely passed. We have to preserve what we have <...> However the process of substitution and absorption of small nations’ languages by great languages is absolutely real. It stands to reason that we should demonstrate sober prepossession to those ideas in which eager appeals to integration by means of losing national achievements and peculiarities of cultures is transparent <...> nations and cultures should be in some things different, unlike, and by losing the distinctive character any cross-fertilization will not be possible, and indeed a necessity of a unity itself will disappear” (Aitmatov, 1988, pp. 110-111).

It was in 1982 when Kyrgyz classic hazarded a remark to the idea of a “grey cardinal” of Communist Party Mikhail Suslov about a gradual fusion of all languages of USSR nations into ubiquitous Russian language.

Moreover, the writer believes that the languages of small nations of the USSR (and other countries) can interact and enrich themselves not only by Russian, but also by other world languages. “My own deep conviction is that a real opportunity exists to save live languages of small peoples and to create conditions for their active involvement into the new forms of spiritual and material existence of the nations, their further improvement both through inner language self-development and by direct and indirect enrichment by means of a culture of progressive world languages” (Aitmatov, 1988, p. 111). In increasing frequency Aitmatov speaks about the necessity of saving national languages, about ominous domination of Russian speaking schools in Kirghizia, which leads to complete displacement of Kyrgyz language in big cities and even in small villages (Aitmatov, 1988, p. 298). By

saying such words his respect and love to the Russian language have not become less strong. And it was not only during the Soviet times, when it was a duty to declare similar attitude and feelings. Aitmatov's convictions remain the same years later after the demise of the Soviet Union. "It was a gift from a fate to live and work in the sphere of two wonderful languages. One is my native Kyrgyz, the other is Russian, a language of people we have been connected with the close links of brotherhood from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. A language – that played and still plays a great role in historical and cultural development of whole Turkmenistan – knowledge of which is a vital need of present days" (Aitmatov, 2018, p. 392), says the author.

According to Mozur, Aitmatov's fiction represents "a unique synthesis of his Central Asian heritage with the Russian-European literary tradition (Mozur, 1995, p. 7). It could be a challenging statement that an important role of the Russian language in the Central Asia was caused by Russian imperial conquest and colonizing politics of Russian imperia and the USSR, that their place as a mediator in the process of acquaintance with the ancestry of world cultures could take another language, for example, Chinese. But it has not happened, and Central Asian countries cannot communicate with each other and the world without a mediating language. Ch. Aitmatov said, that he almost didn't know Chinese literature and the reason was not his own laziness or bad work of translators and editors. He made a supposition that "... maybe this literature is insomuch specific that a consciousness of a contemporary person, who was bred on other samples of culture, simply isn't able to perceive an artistic language of the literature, marked by such high specificity? And only our grandchildren will develop in themselves such ability? I don't know" (Aitmatov, 1988, p. 327). That's why the Russian language was the main "window to the world" during the lifetime of Chingiz Aitmatov, as yet stays in this status for other nations of Central Asia, although day by day English, Turkish, Arabic and Chinese languages go up against it in competition to become a lingua franca. However, it is possible to observe in this situation Aitmatov's self-limitation and limitation of others in using only Russian language as an intermediary language.

#### ***The Russian culture as a mediator in familiarizing with the world cultural heritage***

It is conceivable that similarly to the Russian language, its culture along with native Kyrgyz, took a prominent place in Aitmatov's worldview and his literary works, but absolutely dominated in comparison with other world cultures. The author spoke and wrote repeatedly about irreplaceability of native Kyrgyz culture at the beginning of his creative career, in the 1980s and later. "National traits of people give its culture 'uncommon facial expression'. The connection with the native land, the people's persistent problems of national existence, impregnates the culture with vital, fruitful saps, helps it to reach a broad universal expanse, because there are many common things in the lives of nations, in their worldviews" (Aitmatov, 1988, p. 115). Osmonakun Ibraimov states that "...among Kyrgyz literary historians there is a common opinion that after *Farewell, Gul'sary!* the author actually lost touch with national literary life <...>" (Ibraimov, 2019, p. 123). Almost from the very beginning Aitmatov really overgrows Kyrgyz boundaries to not only all-union level, but also to the global one, due to the problematics of his works and the way of comprehending the world. Later, thematically the author extended Kyrgyz boundaries and culture – for instance, *Spotted Dog Running along the Seashore* grounds on Nivkh's mythology and existence, *The Day Lasts More than a Hundred Years* is about recent past and the present time of Kazakh people, *The Place of the Skull (Plakha)*, in fact, comprises lives of several ethnic groups, but not Kyrgyz.

Although the writer insists on deep-laid basis of native culture and language for any man of letters, in particular, for himself even Russian speaking: "I've told it more than once and I'll repeat myself again, that literature doesn't live out of a definite national background. Somehow it relates to a definite language, its development, specific ethnic environment, and culture. It is impossible to 'jump out' of them, even if you really want to" (Aitmatov, 1988, p. 327).

Georgy Gachev succeeded to solve such controversy. As one of the best Soviet experts on Aitmatov's life and works, he identifies significant traits, unattainable apart from native Kyrgyz ethnos, as universal nomad, who is even different from akin Kazakh by "another vision: nomad, highlander and plowman"; "affinity with animals", "hot liver – explosive", "esthetic refinement"; "thoughtfulness – long meditations on horseback" (Gachev, 2018, p. 302). According to G. Gachev, Kyrgyz people's realm is "a life in Cosmos and in Psyche and Soul" (Gachev, 2018, p. 303). As a systemic whole, it creates "the OPTICS, a special vision of existence both mankind and a human being from a special point of view" (Gachev, 2018, p. 303). That is why even in Aitmatov's literary works about Nivkhs, Kazakhs, and Russians these "optics" anyway remain Kyrgyz.

It is evident that as a representative of Russian people G. Gachev absolutizes the role of Russian culture, particularly literature, in the works and outlook of Chingiz Aitmatov – whereas, on the one hand, he gave prominence to Kyrgyz existence in writers' works, then on the other hand he spoke about the influence of "broadening from Russian and Moscow the modern world civilization: the ideas of socialism, industrialization, urban life, equality of women, and through Russian classical literature – Pushkin, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky – delicate personality and spiritual life" (Gachev, 2018, p. 297–298).

There is evidence to cast doubt on the veracity of above-described statement. Another version could be proved by one episode from Aitmatov's life narrated by Ukrainian writer Petro Skunts. In 1968 a decade of Ukrainian culture in Kirghizia was held. "We were at pains to emphasize equality of our peoples and cultures, Kyrgyz hospitably said 'yes' to us: 'You have Taras (*Taras Shevchenko is the most prominent Ukrainian poet and writer – M.V., L.A.*), we have Manas' ('Manas' is an epos of Kyrgyz people). But for all that they considered us to be the second elder brother after Russia. In one of his toasts, Chingiz Aitmatov said: 'Russian and Ukrainian literatures are two wings of a bird, which is called Soviet literature, and Kyrgyz is only feather'. Our delegation head Oles Honchar denied this comparison and called Soviet literature a bird fly formation, in which all have their proper place" (Skunts, 2011, p.186). By the way, professor Iraj Bashiri believes that "*Manas* continues to remain a part of Kyrgyz culture" (Bashiri, 1999) also due to untiring efforts of Chingiz Aitmatov.

To a great extent the words of Honchar and Aitmatov were etiquettical and semiofficial, but nevertheless Kyrgyz writer wasn't afraid in 1968 to equate Ukrainian and Russian literatures as foundational for all Soviet literature. But it is possible, that deep in his bones Aitmatov agreed with Honchar's statement.

The works of Ukrainian literature and literatures of other peoples of the USSR Aitmatov could read-only in Russian translations. So, Russian culture and language became a fundamental element of his worldview and a mediator in a process of acquiring of rich world culture heritage. Aitmatov knew Russian literature very well and as a prose-writer could not ignore the experience of L. Tolstoy, F. Dostoevsky and other famous Russian writers of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. They had a great impact on his writing career, but not absolute. For example, Aitmatov was astonished by inconsistency between Dostoevsky's artistic genius as a writer and his xenophobia to some nations. "And how to reconcile so valued by Dostoevsky idea of panhuman brotherhood with hatred to Poles, with plea to invasion of Turkey? Personally for me, Dostoevsky as a writer is a finest and unattainable height, Dostoevsky as a thinker is a pain and despair" (Aitmatov, 1988, pp. 323–324).

Much valuable are the Russian language and culture as mediator in acquaintance with the ancestry of world culture, principally, literature. Long before Chingiz Aitmatov the similar thoughts concerning the function of the Russian language, education, culture as mediators for another Turkic people were expressed by famous Kazakh poet and philosopher Abay Kunanbaev (Abai Qunanbaiuly). He said that "Russian science, culture is the key for world treasures. A master of the key will obtain all the rest without much effort. Those Kazakh people who educate children in Russian schools try to use their education as a sign of vantage in strife with relatives. Avoid these intentions. Strive to teach the children to earn daily bread by honest and rational labor; let everybody follow a good lead; and

therefore, we wouldn't face the arbitrariness of Russians, who mansplain when they don't have a single law for everyone. We must study in order to learn what other peoples know, to feel equal with them, to become a protection and support for own people" (Kunanbaiev, 2019, p. 9). So according to Abay, Kazakh people needs Russian language and culture not as an intrinsic value, but as means of acquaintance with world cultural heritage and even as a protector from arbitrariness and oppression of Russian people.

Chingiz Aitmatov develops the thoughts almost after a century in the new conditions, when it was rather dangerous to speak out roundly. According to him, "near thirty years ago there were English, American, French, German, Italian, Russian and Spanish literatures. The world literature was identified with them. Today the boundaries are expended" (Aitmatov, 1988, p. 247). It is important to pay attention that Russian literature is among the list of "great" literatures.

"Modern means of information, communication and transport facilities let the people, I would even say that they compel the people from different countries and continents, despite the deepest political differences and sharply contrast state systems, to be aware of themselves as the members of a single – even if complicated, controversial, rich in contrasts and confrontations – human society, the Earth's People" (Aitmatov, 1988, p. 218). But it is almost impossible for small nations to present even a small part of cultural heritage of "Earth's People", so they ought to use the languages and cultural mediators of big nations, in particularly imperial languages and cultures. Enthusiastically Chingiz Aitmatov wrote about finishing the publication of 200 volumes edition in Russian language "Library of World Literature (Biblioteka vsemirnoiy literaturi)" in his article "Assembly of World literature" (Aitmatov, 1988, Pp. 75–83], because since then every citizen of the USSR have an opportunity to read the best literary texts, created by the representatives of different nations of the world. O. Ibraimov studied Aitmatov's acquaintance with innovative phenomena of West European and American literatures and wrote about "a kind of a glut of translated literature" from the middle of 1950s, when "in Russian began to speak the greatest artists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – from Franz Kafka to Samuel Beckett, from Ernest Hemingway to Nathalie Sarraute" (Ibraimov, 2019, p.129-130). The writer was not interested exceptionally in achievements and creative aspects of the Western literatures, but also in the literatures of Latin America, Asia, and Africa. The usage of myths, the elements of the Magic Realism in works by Aitmatov looked seamless in the context of world literature development, though they seemed unusual in the USSR. For example, Katerina Clark believes that Aitmatov has assembled in a novel *The Day Lasts More than a Hundred Years* "a structure that is made from bits and pieces of the social realist tradition but nevertheless shaped by his own singular intentions" (Cited in: Lahusen & Dobrenko, 1997, p. 12).

Albeit with an interpreter, Chingiz Aitmatov had an opportunity to communicate with the most famous artists and public persons of the time in the world. Those conversations were not just an exchange of pleasantries, but deep thinking concerning the crucial issues of society and art development of those days.

It was not accidental that holding the Issyk-Kul Forum was put in charge and "allowed" exactly to Aitmatov. In 1986 by invitation of Chingiz Toreculovich the charismatic members of world cultural and social elite resolved to visit an "empire of the evil" and went on the banks of Issyk-Kul lake in Kyrgyzstan.

After a breakup of the USSR, since the fall of the Iron Curtain, the new horizons for direct and indirect cultural cooperation with different nations were opened. For example, understanding and growth of ethnic, political and cultural affinity between peoples of the Central Asia and Turkic peoples has developed. According to O. Ibraimov, "<...> the peoples of Central Asia, particularly, five Post-Soviet republics, he (Aitmatov – M.V., L.A.) always considered to be a single inseparable community. Almaty and Tashkent were the home grounds for him, where a lot of his friends and fans lived. By extension, like in Ashgabat and Dushanbe" (Ibraimov, 2019, p. 262-263). Although, in Aitmatov's

consciousness, the borders of Turkic community were further than the borders of the former USSR, and “(a) special place of his heart was taken by Turkey. He fascinatedly took a hard look into cultural and political scenery, which was formed on a borderline of East and West. In Ataturk’s land, Aitmatov recognized the traits of that path, which post-Soviet countries of Central Asia might have taken. The Turks knew about it and return his love” (Ibraimov, 2019, p. 263). So, from definite moment Turkey and the Turkish language, congeneric with other Turkic languages, became for Central Asian peoples, including Kyrgyz and the writer himself the providers and mediator not merely of translated literary and scholarly works, but also the ideological, political, economic, cultural conceptions and concepts. Despite that the Russian language and culture remain the most influential, though not the only one for Central Asia.

### **Conclusions**

In the context of the Soviet Russian empire, many writers from republic colonies started to use actively the Russian language for their writings with a purpose to have a wider range of readers. The process became a common practice after the Second World War and was promoted by the government authorities. One such bilingual writer was Chingiz Aitmatov, who perfected both Kyrgyz and all Union Russian languages and from late 1960s primarily published his work in Russian. The writer consistently commented on the exceptional importance of the Russian language for the USSR nations, particularly for Central Asian peoples. He believed that this language was on the high level of development. That is why it gave both an opportunity for Soviet colonial peoples to communicate with one another; it also had a great influence on national languages self-development and the most important thing that it was a helpful instrument in the process of adoption of world science and cultural heritage. Although Aitmatov said about the necessity of protection and development of his native language, actually it is a basis of his oeuvre, even when an author writes in Russian. From the middle of 1980s, when the danger of Kyrgyz language extinction or displacement to margins was threatened, Chingiz Aitmatov actively throws his weight behind it. But even a greater importance for the writer has native national culture as a ground for his creative wholeness and uniqueness.

Undoubtedly, Chingiz Aitmatov laid a substantial emphasis on Russian culture. But in his opinion, it did not have a crucial and self-sufficient value, in comparison with a function of the Russian language in Central Asia. Russian culture was the most important among many other cultures but was not a single one. It figured mostly as a treasury of moral values and as a teacher for the Asian cultures of the USSR, particularly literatures. Yet more important was its significance as a mediator - foremost by means of a language – in acquiring cultural and moral values of other nations of the world. It gave a strong basis for a cultural development of small Soviet nations, one of which is Kyrgyz. Predominantly it concerns Western cultures, but also others from Latin America, Asia, and Africa. After the disintegration of the USSR, a number of mediating cultures increased for Central Asian nations. In the last years of his life, Chingiz Aitmatov gave Turkey a high status in the process of institutionalization and development of Kyrgyz nation and culture. So, at a personal level writer’s worldview and pencraft was formed due to a synthesis of national traditions and world cultural heritage.

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