



Research Article

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French Reception of the Works by Olzhas Suleimenov

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Abstract

The paper explores the French reception of the works by the Kazakh poet Olzhas Suleimenov. The main goal of the study is to comprehend and summarize this reception as an independent cohesive process. The authors emphasize the role of the translation of Suleimenov's works in creating a positive image of the Kazakh poet in France. The study analyzes the key points of the penetration of Suleimenov's texts into French culture, beginning in the 1970s. Particular attention is paid to reviews of the poem "Earth, Bow Down to Man!", poetry collections "The Book of Clay" and "Transformation of Fire," as well as the reception of his popular science work "Az i IA." As a result of the study, based on the positive French reception of Suleimenov's work, the authors conclude that there is a growing prestige of Kazakh literature and its gradual integration into international culture.

Keywords: literature, Kazakhstan, France, comparative literary studies, translation, reception

1. Introduction

The concept of literary reception refers to the reader's perception of a work of fiction. The problematics of reception are closely related to the historical and literary studies of various schools. The main category of receptive aesthetics is the reader's communication with the text.

German scholars H.R. Jauss (1982) and W. Iser (1978) developed the basic principles of this direction in the 1960s. In the 1970s, American researchers began to investigate the issues of reception in-depth, which led to the emergence of receptive criticism aimed at exploring the reader's reaction. One of the leading representatives of this orientation was S. Fish (1970), author of the essay "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics" (published in 1970 in *New Literary History*).

The goal of American receptive criticism is to accurately describe the reader's consistently evolving perception of a text as it is read. According to Fish, a literary work can be considered complete only after it has been perceived by the reader. The reader's response arises according to their own context, including life experience and the amount of knowledge.

In this article, we discuss various aspects of literary reception and its impact on the perception of works. Of interest in this study is the receptive criticism of certain national literature through the prism of another, that is, the reception of translated works.

The most important prerequisite for the reception of foreign literature is artistic translation. It is through the publication of a literary work in a foreign language that a wide range of readers become acquainted with the best examples of world literature. Due to its distribution in a foreign environment, a translated work becomes an object of reception in another culture.

Here we focus on the perception of Kazakh literature by foreign professional readers, which includes literary critics, scholars, writers, poets, translators, and journalists. Their reception of a translated work is distinguished by the personal professional knowledge of the reader, the objectivity of the outside observer, and new approaches that come from the peculiarities of the development of perceptual literature.

The course of foreign reception of Kazakh literature cannot be demonstrated without determining the importance of literary translation as the main and most effective way for an author to enter a foreign language environment, and as the most important aspect of the foreign reception of literature.

The works of Kazakh writers began to be actively translated into foreign languages in the middle of the 20th century. During the Soviet period (until 1991), most foreign translations were made in the socialist countries of Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Mongolia, and China, but most books were published in German in the German Democratic Republic. The Soviet policy of maintaining friendly relations with these countries was of no small importance. Translations into foreign languages were made through the Russian language.

In English and Spanish, books by Kazakh prose writers were published in Moscow and occasionally in Almaty, and native speakers were involved in translations. Poetic works were published in the magazines *Soviet Literature*, *Literatura Sovietica*, or *International Literature*, *La Literatura Internacional*.

Among the Western European countries, we should emphasize the considerable work in the translation of Kazakh literature carried out in France. In this country, the works of the most prominent Kazakh writers started to be translated into French in the middle of the 20th century, earlier than into other West-European languages. This can be explained by the long-standing special interest of the French literary community in the culture and literature of other peoples, as well as the rich tradition of literary translation. Additionally, an important factor was the personal contacts between representatives of French and Kazakh literatures. For example, the friendship of L. Aragon and M. Auezov, who most likely met in Paris during a meeting with Soviet writers organized by the France-USSR society, is well known.

The renowned French poet, writer, and public figure Aragon initiated the publication of a series of works titled "Littératures soviétiques." In this series, Auezov's novel "Abai's Youth" was published in 1958 in the largest publishing house Gallimard, and in 1960 – the novel "Abai". The preface was written by Aragon. In 1958, French readers warmly received the novel "The Soldier of Kazakhstan" by G. Musrepov. In the series "Littératures soviétiques" published by Gallimard were three books (1967, 1969, 1976) of the novel trilogy "Blood and Sweat" by A. Nurpeisov, as well as "The Tales of Red and Black Sands" (1970) and "Mazdak" (1973) by M. Simashko.

The Soviet period can be described as fruitful in the history of artistic translation in Kazakhstan, as well as in all Soviet republics. This can be attributed to socio-political reasons, namely serious government-level attention to the process of artistic translation. During the period of independence, the process of translation of Kazakh literature into foreign languages somewhat slowed down. However, with time the situation has been improving. With support from the government, the anniversaries of Kazakh literature classics are being celebrated around the world, and the translation of their works abroad is picking up. Correspondingly, the publication of translated works in the far abroad is followed by reviews by foreign authors and other receptive documents.

The works of O. Suleimenov (born 1936), a Kazakh poet, Turkic scholar, and public figure,

played a great role in the history of the foreign reception of modern Kazakh literature. During the Soviet period since the 1970s, he was virtually the only Kazakh poet whose works were the focus of active discussion in other countries. Notably, this reception occurred almost simultaneously with the comprehension of the author's works in his homeland. The main attention in both domestic and foreign publications was paid to the poem "Earth, Bow Down to Man!", poetry collections "The Book of Clay" and "Transformation of Fire," and the popular science work "AZ i IA." It is important to note here that the Kazakh poet writes in Russian.

Suleimenov gained fame in the spring of 1961 when his poem "Earth, Bow Down to Man!" dedicated to Yuri Gagarin's flight into space was published in newspapers. At that time, he was 25 years old. By that moment, Suleimenov had already graduated from the geological faculty of the Kazakh State University and entered the Maxim Gorky Literature Institute in Moscow. Most of Suleimenov's poetic activity fell in the 1960-1980s. His poems were published in the newspapers *Literaturnaia Gazeta* and *Kazakhskaiia Pravda*, as well as in the *Prostor* magazine. Several poetry collections, including "Argamaki," "Sunny Nights," "Round Star," "Defining the Shore," "Year of the Monkey," "The Book of Clay," "Transformation of Fire," and others, were also published. In 1975, he published his first work "Az i IA," dedicated to Turkic linguistics. In the 1990s-2000s, Suleimenov continued to research Turkology and published "The Language of Writing," "Intersecting Parallels," and "The Prehistory of the Turkic-Speaking Peoples."

Suleimenov's biography and works have consistently attracted the attention of a wide range of readers and are reflected in numerous literary publications not only in the poet's homeland of Kazakhstan but also abroad. The search and collection of foreign publications on Suleimenov's creative work were carried out by scholars of the M.O. Auezov Institute of Literature and Art and published in 2015 in the collection "The World of Olzhas Suleimenov." We are proud to have contributed to this collection, not only by collecting materials but also by translating them from foreign languages, including French. "The World of Olzhas Suleimenov" includes articles by foreign researchers on the work of the Kazakh poet translated from various foreign languages into Russian. Receptive material is presented in sections on such countries as Germany, France, the United States, Poland, Hungary, Mongolia, and the Republic of Korea. However, so far, the French material has not been comprehensively and analytically researched, which is the reason for this study.

Suleimenov's works have been translated into many world languages. Considering the process of translation of Suleimenov's poetry into foreign countries, it becomes clear that the Kazakh poet gained the greatest popularity in France. Unlike other Kazakh poets, whose poems were published only in periodicals, some collections of Suleimenov's poems were published in France in the 1970-1980s.

The analysis of the process of reception of the Kazakh poet in France is of exceptional interest to us because the French reception of Suleimenov's works is marked by a great amount of receptive material, both from Soviet times and the period of independent Kazakhstan. The study of the process of translation and reception of Suleimenov's works in France allows us to identify moments of permeation of his texts in a different culture and to determine their role in creating a positive image of the poet in this country. The purpose of the study is to comprehend and generalize the French reception of Suleimenov as an independent integrated process.

The scientific significance is determined by the fact that based on the example of the French reception of Suleimenov's works, it can be argued that Kazakh literature is an integral part of world literature. This factor becomes especially relevant in the period of globalization, when the exchange of information is accelerated with the development of mass communication, making the world into a single informational whole. Speaking about the development of literature under the influence of globalization, D. Damrosch notes: "To capture the ever-expanding literary universe, scholars, and educators need to extend their linguistic and cultural resources, reconsider their methods and teaching, and rethink the place of literature and critique in the world" (Damrosch, 2020).

The issue of the functioning of a literary work in a foreign environment and its reception by foreign professional readers occupies an important place in comparative literary studies. The study of

a work should, ideally, consider the widest possible range of its perceptions because only then can each work be seen as a fact of the universal phenomenon of world literature. Since the main function of literary translation is considered to be its contribution to the establishment and development of international literary relations, the problems of literary translation represent an extensive field of research for comparativists as well. In the course of our research, we reviewed the following scholarly articles on similar topics published in highly ranked peer-reviewed journals: "Circulation in Comparative and World Literature: How the Irish Literary Revival was Received by the Chinese May Fourth Generation" (O'Malley-Sutton, 2020); "The lyric present in English translations of Russian poetry" (Piatkowska, 2020); "Lu Xun and Modern Chinese Literature in the Context of World Literature" (Gu, 2021); "William Blake: The reception of Robert Blair's "Grave" in Serbia" (Bakić, 2022); "A Persian Perception of two French Stories" (Kardgar and Rahimirad, 2022); "On the translation of David Lodge's campus novels into Polish and Russian" (Lubocha-Kruglik, 2022); "Digital keywords for China: Perceptions and portrayals in English language novels" (Matthews & Tung, 2022); "Revisiting Literary Value and Consecration at the Turn of the Century: the Critical Reception of César Aira's Works in the 1980s and 1990s" (Riveiro, 2022). The issues of translation and dissemination abroad are on the radar of contemporary literary scholars around the entire world.

2. Methods

The methodological foundation of this study is formed by the works of literary scholars H.R. Jauss (1982), W. Iser (1978), S. Fish (1970), P.M. Toper (2000), D. Damrosch (2020), V. Zinchenko et al. (2017), and M. Madanova (1999).

This article utilized the descriptive method, which involves the collection, presentation, and characterization of data, as well as the method of systematic analysis, which assumes the study of socio-political conditions and historical processes that shape the course of development of literary phenomena.

Focusing on the French sources covering all aspects of foreign literary reception, we outlined the process of the reception of Suleimenov's works in France. The range of translations made in France was considered as well. As the French reception of the works by Suleimenov is an understudied area of comparativism, we identified the sources that remain unexplored. Additionally, we described the periodization of the reception of Suleimenov's works between the 1970-1990s (the Soviet period), when his books were published in France, and from 1991 to the present day (the period of independence) when the popularity and recognition of the Kazakh poet's talent continued.

3. Results and Discussion

The history of the foreign reception of Suleimenov's poetry is closely linked to the history of artistic translation of his works. In the early 1970s, some of Suleimenov's poems appeared in well-known French literary magazines and newspapers *Les Lettres françaises* (Suleimenov, 1971, pp. 3-5), *Change* (Suleimenov, 1973, p. 122; Suleimenov, 1974, pp. 136-149), and *La Nouvelle critique* (Suleimenov, 1975, p. 31).

In 1972, Suleimenov's poems, mostly taken from his poetry collection "Year of the Monkey," were published together with the works of A. Voznesensky and R. Rozhdvestvensky in the collection "Mais la poésie" ("But poetry"). Compiler and translator L. Schnitzer, in the preface to the book, emphasizes the inner kinship of the three poets. Suleimenov's poetic works were prefaced by the following characterization: "His work, which is a magnificent fusion of Kazakh poetic tradition and contemporary Russian poetry, is as fascinating as it is original; it is a 'Scythian' thought expressed in Russian" (Voznesenskii et al., 1972, p. 132). This idea about the Kazakh poet was confirmed later by Suleimenov himself in his article "Les nomades et la culture" ("Nomads and Culture"), published in 1978 in Paris in the journal "Cultures" – the press body of UNESCO. In it, Suleimenov attempts to define the role and place of nomads in the development of universal spiritual culture: "The richness

of preserved poetic and musical creativity of nomads testifies to a rather high level of their culture" (Suleimenov, 1978, p. 130).

After the release of "Mais la poésie," Suleimenov became known among French writers and journalists. In 1973, the newspaper "Le Monde" published a conversation between the French journalist A. Philipe and Suleimenov. Before reading the conversation with Suleimenov, French readers found the following description of the poet by Philipe: "Suleimenov is a poet more assertive, more keen on the modern world, this is a young, ambitious, and very passionate poet" (Philipe, 1973, p. 18). The French journalist posed many questions during the conversation, including the following: "Do you believe in the coincidence of economic and cultural development?" or "What do you believe expresses the interaction between politics and culture?". Suleimenov answered these questions expertly, demonstrating the breadth of his knowledge and the ability to freely express his opinion on any given topic. In addition, Philipe asked the poet about "The Book of Clay," which, in her opinion, the author treasured. Of note is Philipe's closing question about Suleimenov's life's purpose. We shall cite his answer in full, as these statements were later highlighted and quoted by other French writers: "To achieve the impossible. My motto is: 'The breadth of the present, the depth of the past, the height of the future'. When we reach the ideal point of intersection of these vectors, we will arrive at the ideal state of culture" (Philipe, 1973, p. 18).

"Un citoyen à la frontière de de deux universes" ("A citizen on the border of two worlds") was the title of an article published in 1976 in *La Nouvelle Critique*. It comprised Suleimenov's thoughts about himself and his attitude toward his creative work. The material used was tape recordings made by L. Robel and L. Denis during their meetings with Suleimenov. The publication begins with the poet's biography, as told by himself. In addition, the article includes Suleimenov's description of the history of the beginnings of prose in Kazakh literature. Why prose? Because "poetry is a very ancient tradition among the Kazakhs and in other Eastern literatures" (Suleimenov, 1976, p. 30). Finally, the following significant part of the article is devoted to Suleimenov's story about his book "Az i IA," recently published in his homeland. The French literary community was aware of the controversial reaction to this book, and it was important for them to learn the content of the book from the author himself.

Personal contacts between an author and foreign cultural and literary figures, besides the publication of their works, can also play an important role in their popularization as a foreign-language writer. Festivals with delegates of poets from the Soviet Union. In October 1977, a delegation of poets from the USSR, including Suleimenov, visited France. Apart from Suleimenov, the delegation included such prominent poets as K. Simonov, E. Yevtushenko, B. Okudzhava, and others. Suleimenov's speeches were a great success at meetings with French poetry lovers. In our view, the thoughts expressed by Suleimenov during these conversations and meetings helped to form a positive perception of the Kazakh poet and his work in France.

During his trips to France, the Kazakh poet met L. Robel, who later became not only a translator of his poetry but also a great friend. Robel, among the organizers of meetings of Soviet poets with the wider circles of the French public, noted that these evenings were real festivals of poetry, and Suleimenov's speeches were a discovery for those present.

For Suleimenov himself, the stay in France was very fruitful in terms of creativity. Impressed by his travels, the Kazakh poet created an entire cycle of "Parisian" poems, including "The Night-Parisian," "Paris!," "I Saw a Blind Man in the Louvre," and more. These poems, born under the influence of personal impressions, introduced new motifs into modern Kazakh literature and expanded its associative and imaginative range.

After several trips to France during the Soviet era, Suleimenov returned to the country again during the period of Kazakhstan's independence, this time as an official representative of the Republic of Kazakhstan for UNESCO. In this new capacity, Suleimenov contributed to the further promotion of Kazakh poetry in France and Europe, taking an active part in the celebration of the 200th anniversary of Kazakh poet M. Utemisov under the auspices of UNESCO. Thus, his personal experience of participating in the international reception of Kazakh poetry proved useful.

In 1977, "Publications orientalistes de France" published "The Book of Clay" in French. The translation was done by Robel, who also translated into French the poetry collection "Transformation of Fire," published in 1981 in Paris by Gallimard.

French readers and literary critics took an interest in Suleimenov's poetry, and the talented poet and translator Robel deserves much credit for it. It is known that "the success of a translated work is always a success of the author shared with the translator, and the higher the praise of the work in foreign reviews, the more eloquently it indicates the quality of the artistic translation" (Madanova, 1999, pp. 89-90). Suleimenov was lucky in this respect, as Robel succeeded in conveying the emotionality of the young Kazakh poet's poetic style and the versatility of his natural poetic talent. Robel has long taught at the National Institute of Oriental Languages and Civilizations and was the director of the scientific Center for Comparative Poetics at the Sorbonne. He published many books and articles on modern poetry and the theory and practice of translation. Robel translated into French the works of Gorky, Solzhenitsyn, Kirsanov, and Voznesensky. For his translation work, Robel was awarded the Soviet Badge of Honor.

The way of thinking and the form of poetic presentation in Suleimenov's works were close to the creative nature of Robel, who, in one of the 1976 issues of the famous Parisian newspaper Europe, shared a characteristic confession: "In my opinion, today Olzhas Suleimenov is one of the most significant poets of our time... What strikes most in Suleimenov's creativity is his scope and complete freedom both in the choice of themes and expressive means. His poetic continent is a whole world, in which he mentally surveys with passion the modern outlines and the deepest ancient origins" (Robel, 1976, p. 145).

Along with the translation, Robel prepared a preface to "The Book of Clay." In it, the French translator noted the peculiarities of Suleimenov's poetic creativity, which he described as "an original combination of irony and force of narration, tenderness, and humor. Lightness of form: non-observance of rules of versification, consonance of words in various languages, rhymed prose, stanzas, free wide verse, parodies of ancient primary sources, riddles, poems of modern and more classical rhyme – all these abundant methods are based on the idea that hides seriousness and depth in a humorous form" (Suleimenov, 1977, p. 7).

In 1978, the famous French writer, poet, and literary critic P. Gamarra dedicated an article in the magazine Europe to "The Book of Clay." This article quotes facts from the biography of the Kazakh poet taken from the preface by Robel. Gamarra explains this in the following way: "It is necessary to know about these things before you start reading 'The Book of Clay'. Beneath the irony, the complacency, the expressive sensuality of this poem – this satirical epic – hides vast literary and historical science. Certainly, here the knowledge is modeled, considered, and altered by the poet" (Gamarra, 1978, p. 218). The French author appreciates the peculiarities of Suleimenov's poetic creativity: "The poet is rightly, in the highest degree, the one who knows how to proceed from symbol to reality, from body to sign to unite diversity" (Gamarra, 1978, p. 219).

Gamarra's positive review was of great importance in the French reception of Suleimenov's work because in France, Gamarra was known as one of the most significant modern writers. In the Soviet Union, Gamarra's work was also recognized, although this popularity was somewhat ideological, as he was a member of the French Communist Party. In his poetry collections, Gamarra described the horrors of war, praised the courage of anti-fascists, and called for peace. As a novelist, he was known for his historical, social, and satirical novels. Additionally, he directed the monthly literary magazine Europe founded in 1923 by a group of writers, including prominent French writers R. Rolland and L. Aragon.

The overwhelming interest that the poetry collection "Transformation of Fire" aroused was strongly reflected in numerous reviews in the press. French professional readers discovered new and unexpected definitions to characterize Suleimenov's poetry, which undoubtedly deepened our understanding of the poet's original talent.

In this light, it is worth recalling the words of the famous French poet, prose writer, publicist, and literary critic A. Bosquet: "Olzhas Suleimenov is a geologist by profession; he has the reflections

of a specialist who measures phenomena in layers and millions of years; life seems to him a phenomenon that socialist realism cannot explain. He calls the whole planet to witness his excitement, speaking consistently as a great skeptic and as a person capable of questioning many contemporary problems, whatever their origins may be. He is close to us with a kind of naïve and yet bitter bewilderment" (Bosquet, 1981, p. 11). As Bosquet rightly notes, "a convinced Asian, a geologist who thinks in categories of eternity, he is a poet who is not oblivious to the existence of the otherworld. He rushes across the space of modern lyricism" (Bosquet, 1981, p. 11). Bosquet was a winner of the Grand Prix of the French Academy. He has about 30 collections of poetry, a dozen and a half novels, and numerous essays and translations, mostly of Russian poetry. All this suggests that the appreciation of Suleimenov's poetry by the famous master of modern French literature made a significant contribution to the popularization of Suleimenov's literary work in France.

No less valuable is the opinion of another famous literary figure, L. Ray, a French poet, winner of the Mallarmé Prize, and the French National Prize for Literature. Ray believed that Suleimenov's past as a geologist is constantly evident in his poetry: "Attentive to technique and to the surprises of drilling, he knows that a straight vertical line is not always the surest way to the deposit, that damned stratum one strives for all his life. Out of a passion for drilling, digging, arranging, he creates fascinated, passionate, and tumultuous poetry" (Ray, 1981, p. 126).

Notably, a reference to the profession of a geologist can also be found in other receptive materials on the works by Suleimenov. An important point here is the poet's own statement "I am a geologist," with which the book "Transformation of Fire" begins.

As the French poet and translator C. Mouze wrote in the literary magazine *Esprit*, "the native land of Kazakhstan, its topography, history, customs, myths feed the poetry of Suleimenov – a geologist, philologist, historian, and simultaneously a poet. ... Humor and fantasy constitute the very nerve of this poetry, which rejects any passive contemplation of native culture" (Mouze, 1982, p. 203). Evaluating the importance of Suleimenov's work, Mouze stressed that "it is the poetry of struggle taking place in history and in the life of the word: the poet questions, challenges, struggles with his land. His thought remains critical, he indulges in irony, jokes, and satire" (Mouze, 1982, p. 203).

Analyzing extensive materials of French reception of Suleimenov's poetry, we should pay attention to the article by F. Salvaigne published in the newspaper *Humanité dimanche* in 1982. The French writer also touched upon Suleimenov's geological education and described the poetry of the Kazakh poet as "caustic, verbose poetry, compressed like a shrub on a desert plain. Clear and at the same time mystical poetry, which burns with the lingering melody of the whistle the physical density of nature" (Salvaigne, 1982, p. 19). Salvaigne drew attention to the fact that this book was translated into French by Robel. In addition to the indisputable poetic skill of the Kazakh author, the name of the French translator could also generate additional interest in reading this book among French readers. In French literary circles, Robel was known as an experienced translator who did a lot of poetry translations. In this work, he gave preference to the writings of those poets who were close to his way of thinking.

The book "Transformation of Fire" is the subject of an article by the French poet and literary critic F. Combes in the magazine *Europe*, where he was a member of the editorial board from 1981 to 1992. He asserts that Suleimenov can be simultaneously sensual, epic, restless, whimsical, deep, and always full of life. The difficulty lies precisely in capturing the most important in him because this poet is always on the move. Combes also highlights Suleimenov's research abilities in the creation of his poetry.

An important characteristic of Suleimenov's creativity is found in the summary of "Transformation of Fire": "This Kazakh poet, born in the heart of Asia, by transforming the fire of inspired knowledge creates a wonderful tool for expressing our modernity – an unforgettable epic from the beginning of history to our threatening tomorrow, with wry irony, sarcasm, passion, humor, and all other known and unknown sources of words and rhythmic prose. The resounding voice of our time, surprisingly different and our own" (Suleimenov, 1981).

Thus, we examined the French reception of the works by Suleimenov from the Soviet period,

when his main works were translated and published. Widely organized translation stimulates real international recognition. In the process of foreign translation, the originals, written initially in Russian, helped translators to more authentically reproduce them in foreign languages, bypassing the stage of mediation of any other language. During the Soviet period, the foreign reception of Suleimenov's poetry fostered a new approach to the reception of Kazakh literature abroad. Thanks to the prose novels of M. Auezov, G. Mustafin, G. Musrepov, S. Mukanov, and A. Nurpeisov, foreign readers were already familiar with the Kazakh people and their history. Reviews of the late 1950s and 1960s had more of an introductory purpose and often included retelling of the content and focused the reader's attention on the ethnographic realities and local flavor, the exoticism of the described reality. In the 1970s and 1980s, the attention of foreign authors turned to modern Kazakh poetry through Suleimenov's example. Foreign literary criticism focused on revealing the originality of his artistic skill. Individual poetry collections of other Kazakh poets translated into foreign languages began to appear only in the 1990s-2000s.

During the period of Kazakhstan's independence, many foreign publications on Suleimenov's work gained new meaning and not only brought new aspects into the study of the history of Kazakh literature but also demonstrated a clear connection between literature and the socio-political development of modern society. In 2003, Suleimenov participated in a special issue of *Printemps des Poètes* dedicated to foreign poets in the collection "Letters of Youth. Ten poets talk about hope". The key question about the role of poetry in the modern world was answered by poets from ten countries: France, Italy, Germany, Portugal, the US, Israel, Lebanon, Bangladesh, Cuba, and Kazakhstan. All texts were presented in their original language and French. Suleimenov's article "Le siècle de clairvoyance" ("The century of clairvoyance") was structured as a letter to a young poet, in which the Kazakh poet wrote about the purpose of poetry: "If the nation is kind, it has become so because of the poets. This is what I see as the duty of poetry – to make people kind" (Suleimenov, 2003, p. 62). Interestingly, as in the case of any significant literary phenomenon, new translations of the Kazakh poet's works continue to appear to this day. In 2008, a poetry collection "Le vent des steppes" ("The Wind of the Steppes") with selected poems by Suleimenov, Sh. Sariyev, and N. Orazalin in French was presented in Paris.

National history for Suleimenov was a constant source not only of his poetic works but also of popular scientific research. The poet looks for the origins of many contemporary problems in the history of his ancestors, which were not preserved in the official chronicles. For several decades, the author has been studying various issues of national and world history, Turkology, and general and comparative linguistics. As a young man, he devoted much time to learning the history and interpretation of the Russian epic "The Tale of Igor's Campaign". As a result, his book "Az i IA" caused a real stir in academic circles. The first part of the book is devoted to the famous monument of Old Russian literature. Many years of study of the Tale resulted in a reflection on the relationship between Ancient Rus' and the Turkic steppe in an attempt to clarify some of the dark places in the medieval text. These attempts were regarded as a very frivolous approach to scientific problems, for which the poet was severely criticized.

Reception of the book by foreign researchers was an example of how the process of reception of Kazakh literature abroad developed, and the discussion of this book contributed to the appearance of detailed and serious foreign scientific articles devoted to the works by Suleimenov. One of the most interesting foreign sources belongs to the period of independence – an extensive research article by French researcher F. Diat "Olzhas Suleimenov: Az i IA", which consists of seven parts.

The first part of Diat's article provides biographical data on the Kazakh poet and outlines Suleimenov's creative path until the mid-1970s. At the end of this part, the author writes an original commentary: "In the 1960s Olzhas Suleimenov was at the peak of fame and was rewarded for each of his ascent. In 1966, he was elected a member of the Union of Writers of Kazakhstan. In order to preserve the political system and literary tradition, it was typical for the regime of that time to exalt and praise cultural figures. Beyond that, Moscow was very fond of granting various honors to the writers of the other Soviet republics, who were an excellent product of the Soviet regime. Suleimenov

seemed to be a model of the intellectual and social development conditions granted to all non-Russian citizens by the Soviet hierarchy. But this harmony between Suleimenov and the Soviet authorities was disrupted after the publication of his book 'Az i IA' in 1975" (Diat, 2015, p. 121). This bold criticism of the Soviet regime is a telling example of the evolution of foreign reception of Kazakh literature associated with Suleimenov's reception. "Az i IA", which in the Kazakh literary community is referred to as a "scientific revelation and a civil feat", prompted the foreign literary critic to a revelation as well.

In the second section of the article titled "The Unusual Book", Diat clarifies some aspects of the book title "Az i IA", which is a masterful wordplay: "The book title gives an idea of the inimitable synthesis of precision and humor and at the same time knowledge and imagination" (Diat, 2015, p. 123). "AZ" in ancient Slavic means "I". "IA" in modern Russian has the meaning of the first person pronoun. With the help of the conjunction "i" ("and") the two words create the form "Asia". Diat proceeds: "This is the very Asia that Suleimenov protects. In reality, despite the poet's close connection with European culture, he is fluent in his native language and is full of pride in his lineage" (Diat, 2015, p. 124). The author notes that to support his claims Suleimenov uses the soundest linguistic and historical evidence.

In the following sections, the French researcher reflects on the relations between Russians and Turks in the steppe and between Turks and Sumerians, referring to the research of Suleimenov, who offered new explanations for some historical events and tried to prove the antiquity of Russian-Turkic relations. As for the links between Turks and Sumerians, they are not limited to language or spiritual values. Elements of the two cultures have a certain similarity, which has been proven during archaeological excavations in Iraq, Asia, Siberia, Eastern Europe, and Mongolia. In conclusion, the author of the article suggests the following: "The struggle conducted by Suleimenov had to deal a blow to the established stereotypes born out of fear of the pan-Turkist movement and to Russian nationalism. Under harsh socialism, 'Az i IA' has national and freedom-loving traits. Suleimenov's views differed fundamentally from the official ideology and the dominant ideas of Marxism-Leninism" (Diat, 2015, p. 130). The author continues to show his negative stance towards the Soviet regime, which is manifested throughout the text of the article. Diat calls the confrontation of the Kazakh researcher with erroneous historical knowledge and his emphasis on the need for independence from the politics of history a positive deed.

Diat's article was first translated into Russian for the aforementioned scientific collection "The World of Olzhas Suleimenov". The section "France" in this collection also includes articles: "On the Works of Olzhas Suleimenov" by R. Dor, "Suleimenov and Contemporary Culture of Kazakhstan" by B. Shambaz, and "A Poet Between Two Worlds: Contribution to the Study of O. Suleimenov" by A. Fischler.

Let us present Dor's statement characterizing Suleimenov's work: "The breadth of interests, both literary and scientific, nourishes and permeates all his work" (Dor, 2015, p. 140). Shambaz, explaining his desire to visit Kazakhstan, cites as one of the reasons his acquaintance with Suleimenov's poetry: "I liked Poems by O. Suleimenov for the attitude of man to space, to the land. And I wanted to see first hand the land and the people who inspired his poetry" (Shambaz, 2015, p. 141).

French literary scholar, honorary professor of the University of Paris, and Chevalier of the Order "Academic Palm Branch" in the field of French literature Fischler repeatedly visited Kazakh cities in the 1990s and early 2000s. In his article, he tells how he met Suleimenov in Kazakhstan and France at numerous international colloquiums devoted to the anniversaries of classics of Kazakh literature: "And each meeting showed that in the modern literary world it occupies an important place" (Fischler, 2015, p. 145). According to the French researcher, Suleimenov is distinguished by his love for his country, compassion for the Kazakh people, and empathy for all peoples of the world. Fischler describes it as follows: "Olzhas Suleimenov is, in our belief, one of the herald poets of Kazakhstan, a poet on the border of two worlds and two epochs" (Fischler, 2015, p. 147). Fischler notes that the man, born in the 1930s and living at a time when all kinds of changes penetrated deeply into all the

traditional structures of the Soviet Union and destroyed them, is characterized by wise thinking, familiar and common to all mankind. Drawing attention to the laconic and often acrimonious style of the poet, the scholar recalls that in the 1980s Suleimenov was the leader of the Nevada-Semipalatinsk movement and opposed nuclear explosions at the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site, victims of which were both humans and nature.

Analyzing Suleimenov's poems, Fischler cites several passages from the poetry collection "Transformation of Fire", which, as previously noted, was translated into French in 1981. Fischler notes that in the creation of "The Red Messenger and the Black Messenger", the poet uses alliteration to convey the running of the racing horses. In the poem "Cactus", he sharply and mockingly conveys the image of the main character. In the poem "From January to April", he can suddenly go from a humorous and sarcastic register to a different one filled with tragic intonations. Suleimenov's poetry is based on short, compact, sharp rhythms, as in the "Minute of Silence at the End of the World". In summary, Fischler concludes that "Suleimenov deserves constant attention and recognition because he managed to absorb the intellectual wealth of the universe that he encountered, as for him, the difference means not dispersion, but the production of a bouquet of enriching influences" (Fischler, 2015, p. 158).

A new document of the positive French perception of Suleimenov is the speech of the French professor C. Pujol in 2021 in Almaty at the international conference "We Roam Towards, Recognizing in the Other: Olzhas and the Rapprochement of Cultures". Calling Suleimenov an extraordinary man and universal personality, Pujol told that she had first heard about Suleimenov from Robel, who had been her teacher at the National Institute of Oriental Languages and Civilizations in the 1970s. There Pujol studied Arabic and Persian. Then, as a teacher at INALCO, she arranged for students to translate an excerpt from Suleimenov's book "Az i IA" into French. Finally, they met in Paris in the 1990s-2000s at conferences and events devoted to Kazakh literature. Pujol paid attention to Suleimenov's literary career in France, namely the process of publishing his books in French. She mentioned that in 2007 Suleimenov had received the Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres (Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters) - "French recognition of his immense intellectual contribution. Proof that he is loved in France. I think he loves France, too" (Pujol, 2021, p. 146).

Another proof of the recognition of Suleimenov's work in France is the fact that in 2022 the Ambassador of France to Kazakhstan D. Canesse handed him the badge of distinction of the Officer of the National Order of the Legion of Honor. We can see that France has not forgotten Suleimenov, currently the director of the International Center for the Rapprochement of Cultures under the auspices of UNESCO in Almaty.

4. Conclusion

This article presents various aspects of the French literary reception of Suleimenov's work, including press reviews, prefaces to books, articles in scientific collections, and speeches at conferences. During the Soviet period, reviews in the French press were offered by writer and literary critic P. Gamarra, novelist and publicist A. Bosquet, poet L. Ray, poet and translator C. Mouze, and others. A conversation between journalist A. Philippe and Suleimenov was published in the newspaper Monde. The preface to the poetry collections published in French is written by the poet and translator L. Robel.

During the period of independent Kazakhstan, French researchers R. Dor, B. Shambaz, F. Diat, and A. Fischler published articles in scientific collections, and professor C. Pujol gave a speech at an international conference. The study reveals that French professional readers recognize Suleimenov's literary talent, noting the originality of his poetry. In their reviews, they note the combination of the Kazakh poet's modern approach to the raised issues with ancient Eastern wisdom. They are impressed with the irony, humor, and satire with which he can convey his profound ideas. The contents of his poems, such as "The Book of Clay", lead French literary scholars to believe that the author conducted serious literary and historical research for their creation. Suleimenov's poetry

attracts and fascinates French readers, as it is written in an original modern language, and the themes of the poems are diverse. In addition, Suleimenov's poems present deep reflections on the fate of all mankind organically intertwined with national themes.

Suleimenov's work holds exceptional importance in the process of the reception of Kazakh literature abroad, as his poetry was analyzed by many foreign researchers both during the Soviet era and the independence of Kazakhstan. The positive French reception of Suleimenov's writings exemplifies the growing authority of the literature of Kazakhstan in the far abroad. As a result of this analysis, the status of Kazakh literature as an integral part of world literature becomes more apparent.

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