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**AL-FARABI'S WORLD HISTORICAL TRAVELS:
FROM CENTRAL ASIA AND THE MIDDLE EAST,
TO EUROPE AND RUSSIA, AND BACK AGAIN**

The article is widely covered by the survey of my plenary addresses in the 5th International Farabi Forum which was held by Al-Farabi Kazakh National University (Almaty, Kazakhstan, April 3-4, 2018). Important reasons for the study of al-Farabi and his work were: many of the manuscripts of al-Farabi are insufficiently studied and inaccessible to the scientific world or the general public; in former Soviet Central Asia, although Soviet science made an important contribution to the study of al-Farabi, she forcibly filtered her ideas –just as she filtered the views of Firdousi, Abay, and others through Marxist-atheistic ideology; from the western (Euro-American) perspective, even less of al-Farabi's research was done because of the "western Eurocentric" bias. The "Western Eurocentric" bias interpreted the work of al-Farabi through the prism of its various Western Christian and / or democratic perspectives and values; A more strict "orthodox" Muslim view questioned or completely rejected the main aspects of the study of al-Farabi (and other Islamic thinkers of this period), considering it incompatible with some Quran teachings that are understood from conservative ulemic theological traditions (Fakhry, 2002: 135).

Key words: al-Farabi, philosophy, Islam, Middle East, europocentrism.

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**Әл-Фарабидің әлемдік тарихи саяхаты: Орталық Азиядан және Таяу Шығысқа,
Еуропа мен Россияға және кері қайту**

Берілген мақала әл-Фараби атындағы Қазақ ұлттық университетінің негізінде өткізілген 5-ші Фараби форумының пленарлық тұсаукесерінде оқылған трактатының кеңейтілген түрі (Қазақстан, Алматы, 3-4 сәуір 2018 жыл). Әл-Фараби жұмыстарын зерттеу себептерінің ең өзекті мәселелері: әл-Фараби қолжазбаларының жеткілікті деңгейде зерттелмегендігінен және сонымен қатар ғылым әлеміне, көпшілікке жеткілікті түрде болмаған еді; Бұрынғы кеңестік Орталық Азияда кеңестік ғылым әл-Фарабиді тануда көптеген үлестерін қосса да, Фирдауси көзқарастарының сұрыпталуы сияқты, Абай және басқа да маркстік-атеистік идеология; батыстық (евро-американдық) перспективалары тұрғысынан, сондай-ақ өте аз ауқымдылықта «батыстық-евроцентристік» бағытта қарастырылып, зерттелген. «Батыстық евроцентристік» бағыттағы көзқарастар әл-Фараби еңбектерін батыстық христиандық және демократиялық перспективалары мен құндылықтары негізінде қарастырылған еді. Ең негізгі өте қатты сыни «ортодоксальді» мұсылмандық көзқарастары біраз күмән туғызатын мәселелер немесе толықтай әл-Фараби зерттеулерінен бас тартушылық туғызған болса (сонымен бірге осы кезеңдегі басқа да ислам ойшылдары), кейбір Құран ілімдерімен келіспеушіліктерінен, консервативті дәстүрлі әлем сенімдеріне сәйкес келмегендіктен деп түсінген болатын (Fakhry, 2002: 135).

Түйін сөздер: аль-Фараби, философия, ислам, Орта Азия, европоцентризм.

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Соединённые Штаты Америки, г. Вашингтон, e-mail: rc.weller@wsu.edu**Мировые исторические путешествия Аль-Фараби:
из Средней Азии и Ближнего Востока в Европу и Россию и обратно**

Статья является расширенным трактатом пленарного выступления на 5-ом Ежегодном Международном Фараби форуме (Казахский национальный университет им. аль-Фараби. Алматы, Казахстан, 3-4 апреля 2018 года). Важными причинами исследования аль-Фараби и его трудов стали: много рукописей аль-Фараби недостаточно изучены и недоступны для научного мира или широкой общественности; в бывшей советской Средней Азии, хотя советская наука вносила важный вклад в изучение аль-Фараби, она насильственно отфильтровала свои идеи – точно так же, как она отфильтровала взгляды Фирдоуси, Абая и других – через марксистско-атеистическую идеологию; с западной (евро-американской) перспективы, еще меньше исследований аль-Фараби было сделано из-за «западного евроцентрического» уклона. «Западный евроцентрический» уклон интерпретировал работу аль-Фараби через призму своих различных западных христианских и / или демократических перспектив и ценностей; более строгий «ортодоксальный» мусульманский взгляд поставил под сомнение или полностью отклонил основные аспекты исследования аль-Фараби (и других исламских мыслителей этого периода), считая несовместимым с некоторыми учениями Корана, которые понимаются с консервативных улемических богословских традиции.

Ключевые слова: аль-Фараби, философия, ислам, Средняя Азия, европоцентризм.

There are at least four important reasons for dedicating time and effort to the honor and promotion of Al-Farabi and his work:

1- Generally speaking, there are still many manuscripts and, within them, aspects of Al-Farabi's thinking which have not been sufficiently researched and made available to the scholarly world or broader public;

2- Within former Soviet Central Asia, although Soviet scholarship made important contributions to the study of Al-Farabi, it forcibly filtered his ideas -- in the same way it filtered the views of Firdousi, Abai, and others -- through a Marxist-Atheist lens;

3- From a Western (Euro-American) perspective, even less research has been done on Al-Farabi because of a 'Western Eurocentric' bias which perpetuates itself for numerous complicated reasons. Like the Soviet view, this 'Western Eurocentric' bias has interpreted al-Farabi's work through the prism of its own various Western Christian and/or democratic perspectives and values (cf. European Medieval as well later Cold War scholarship for both #2 and #3) [see also Bahrani 2014];

4- A more strictly 'orthodox' Muslim view – going back as far as al-Ghazali and even to Farabi's own lifetime under al-Mutawakkil – has called into question, or dismissed outright, major dimensions of al-Farabi's (and other Islamic Golden Age) thinking as being incompatible with certain teachings of the Qur'an as understood within conservative Ulemic theological traditions [Fakhry 2002: 135].

The annual Farabi Forum at al-Farabi Kazakh National University (Almaty, Kazakhstan) and other such Turko-Persian venues make important contributions to the study of Al-Farabi and his legacy by bringing all of these historically pervasive views into academic dialogue with scholarship emanating from Al-Farabi's Central Asian homeland.

Al-Farabi was of course born in 870, the same year Al-Kindi died. He therefore helped lay the foundations for the Islamic 'Golden Age' of science, philosophy, medicine and other scholarship. The Islamic Golden Age itself represents a major phase within human intellectual history.

Islamic Golden Age within Main Stages of Human Intellectual History
1 Scientific Advances in the Ancient & Early Medieval World, 3000 BCE – 750 CE
<i>2 Islamic Golden Age of Science & Scholarship, 750-950 CE</i>
3 From the Islamic world to Western Europe and Mongol China, 975 – 1600 CE
4 Western advances (Renaissance, Sci & Industrial Revs), 1400 – 1970
5 From the West back to the Islamic & broader Asian world, 1700-1970

Sources of Islamic Science

Persian / Zoroastrian
 Indian / Hindu
 Syrian / Christian
 Greek / Secular, Christian & Jewish
 Central Asian / Buddhist & Secular

Al-Farabi thus participates in an important way in the preservation and development of 'human civilization' at the world historical level. Or, as S.F. Starr put it in his volume *Lost Enlightenment*: "A writer of global import, Farabi was a prince of medieval thought, East and West" [Starr 2013:184; cf. Shaukenova 2012].

Indeed, Al-Farabi played a central role in the very classification of sciences (*Ihṣā' al-'Ulūm*) [Amine 1949], drawing from the traditions of Aristotle and Al-Kindi and then influencing directly the further work of Ibn Sina, Roger Bacon and others [Zhautykov 1971: 4-6; Salman 1939; cf. Mahdi 1975]. He thus helped define our modern university structures and disciplines [cf. Makdisi 1981]. His widespread, long-lasting influence reaches across centuries, right down to our own day, touching into numerous fields of scholarship. This includes his impact, for example, on the 16th century Italian musicians Gafuri, Fogliani and Zarlino and the 19th century German poet Ludwig Kosegarten [Zhautykov 1971: 8; cf. Farmer 1965 and Starr 2013: 159] as well as the work of Al-Razi, Al-Biruni, Omar Khayam, Ibn Rushd, Leonardo de Vinci, and more [Nysanbaev]. "Advancing a notion of God as the First Mover, Farabi exerted a significant influence, directly and indirectly, on St. Thomas Aquinas, Dante, and even Kant, as well as on the Jewish medieval thinker Maimonides" [Starr 2013: 184].

Manuscripts of Al-Farabi's work are not only housed in Muslim world libraries such as Istanbul, Beirut, Damascus, and Cairo, but in European and American libraries such as New York, Paris, Madrid, London, Sweden, Leiden, and Munich [Zhautykov 1971: 8; Nysanbaev]. This was, in certain cases, the result of European colonialism and (thus may represent of form of cultural theft which) continues in some ways to obstruct ongoing research into Al-Farabi's heritage. This obstruction persists in two ways: because Euro-American scholars do not take sufficient interest in Al-Farabi even though they have sufficient access to many of his manuscripts, while Muslim world scholars, who do take interest, face major geographical, financial and political-cultural obstacles in gaining access to these Euro-American

archives (cf. e.g. the 2017 immigration ban enacted U.S. president Donald Trump).

But the presence of Al-Farabi's manuscripts in these Euro-American libraries leads me to four final points which summarize "Al-Farabi's World Historical Travels: From Central Asia and the Middle East, to Europe and Russia, and Back Again" to his Central Asian homeland. Generally, we can agree with Zhakipbek Altayev who, in an important interview titled "The Return of the Heritage of al-Farabi to the Kazakh Steppe," distinguishes five main periods of scholarship in Farabi studies [Altayev 2016]. I myself will limit it to four related though distinct periods, with a differing chronological framework and emphasis upon the world historical connections between them:

1- Al-Farabi himself traveled from his home in Farab (Otrar) on the Kipchak Steppe to Baghdad, Damascus and possibly Cairo in the Middle East, contributing to Islamic Golden Age scholarship. He spoke of this as follows in one of his poetic reflections:

Forgive me, o land of birth,
 I left you behind.
 Forgive me, o nation of birth,
 I traversed a distant road.
 You will perhaps forgive me, generations of my
 people,
 I did not find fame, fortune or glory.
 You will perhaps forgive me, my moral conscience,
 Knowledge was what I sought and followed.

“Кешір мені, туған жер,
 Сені артқа тастадым.
 Кешір мені, туған ел,
 Жолды алыс бастадым.
 Кешірет мені ұлыс-ұрпағым,
 Бақ, байлық, даңқ таппадым.
 Кешірет мені, ар-ожданым,
 Білім болды баққаным», – degeni sol
 [Нұрмұратов, Ғабитов және т.б. 2014: 94; cf.
 Нысанбаев].

2- Al-Farabi traveled, by way of his manuscripts, to Europe, influencing the European Renaissance and Scientific Revolution both directly through his own works and indirectly through the works of other Islamic Golden Age scholars [cf. again Salman 1939, etc.; see above].

3- Al-Farabi then traveled (with other Islamic Golden Age scholars) to Russia via Europe through various avenues: First, he entered by way of Farabi's (direct as well as indirect) influence upon Thomas

Aquinas and other medieval scholastic thinkers. This thread of influence made its way to Russia via the connection between Greek and Russian Orthodoxy [Plested 2012: 178-184] – including the diffusion of scholastic education throughout Russia and Ukraine [Sokolov 2015] – as well as Catholic influence in Russia [Dunn 2004]. Farabi also traveled from Western Europe to Russia through the efforts of Peter the Great and the liberal Russian ‘Westernizers’. These various strands of influence making their way into Russia across the long centuries would eventually lead to increasing attention to the work of Farabi in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Thus, M. Steinschneider’s critical biography of Farabi was published in St. Petersburg in 1869 and Farabi’s contributions to world historical scholarship were highlighted in F.A. Brockhaus and I.A. Efron’s encyclopedia published in St. Petersburg between 1908 and 1913 [Altayev 2016]. Meanwhile, “Russian orientalists and philosophers” such as V.V. Bartold (1869-1930), Ignaty Krachkovsky (1883-1954) and Yevgeni Bertels (1890-1957) took increasing interest in Al-Farabi in the early 20th century [Altayev 2010: 4].

4- Al-Farabi returned to his Central Asian homeland via Russia through the Jadidist reform efforts of Shihabetdin (or Shihab al-Din) Marjani (1818-99), Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani (1838-1897), Ismail bey Gasprali (1851-1914), Altinsarin, Abai, Shakerim, the Alash Orda and other Central Asian Muslim scholars. They formed an essential part of the Islamic world encounter with ‘modernity’ confronting them via encroaching European empires across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Jadidists and other Islamic modernist reformers helped reclaim a heritage of world scholarship originally passed to the West via their Central Asian ancestors and other Islamic Golden Age thinkers [Weller 2014: 350-351; cf. Lazzerini 1994: 41-42]. Islamic Golden Age science, including that of Farabi, had contributed to the Western advances in science and technology which the Muslim modernist reformers then learned from the Western colonial powers, including Russia. Al-Afghani and Gasprali pointed to these world historical travels of Al-Farabi (and other Islamic Golden Age scholars)

when they said, respectively: “The Europeans welcomed Aristotle, an émigré who became an Arab” [al-Afghani 1880/1942: 179-182; cf. Keddie 1972: 84-87 and Keddie 1983: 73-95] and “The Europeans are the most civilized people of our times. Their teachers were Muslims” [Gasprali 1886: 87; cf. Lazzerini 1994: 33]. As part of these world historical travels, Gasprali, in an early article titled “First Steps toward Civilizing the Russian Muslims,” highlighted “the intention of renovating the educational method” in order to include study of “the likes of ‘Ali Husayn Ibn Sina, Farabi, ... Ibn Khaldun” and other Islamic Golden Age thinkers. According to Gasprali, Jadid reformers at the time had already “been rather successful in reforming and reorganizing the following madrasas: the Zinjirli in Bakhchisarai, the Barudi in Kazan, the Osmanov in Ufa, and the Husaynov in Orenburg.” They had done this by incorporating the study of Al-Farabi and others into their curriculum [Kurzman 2002: 225]. Al-Afghani for his part, though critical in some ways of the Islamic philosophical tradition, nonetheless explicitly promoted “The Benefits of Philosophy” as reflected in the work of Farabi and other Islamic Golden Age scholars [Keddie 1983: 109-122; cf. 63-65]. Afghani interacted with Central Asian Muslims, even traveling to Saint Petersburg (1887-89) to foster unity among the Muslims of Russia. His ideas and writings were known among them.

Of course, Al-Farabi always remained in his Central Asia homeland, both in heart and in scholarship. He thus cried out: “I missed you so, my precious Kipchak fathers, my land of birth.” (Kazakh: ‘Айналайын атам қыпшақ, туған жерім, сағындым’) [Nurmuratov, Gabitov zhane t.b. 2014: 95; cf. Nysanbaev]. But he journeyed around the world, across space and time, both returning home and remaining abroad forever – in the libraries, educational systems and modern cultural and scientific lifeways encountered across the globe. The Farabi Forum and other continuing efforts of Al-Farabi Kazakh National University play a key role in preserving, renewing and spreading the heritage of Al-Farabi, in this generation and many more yet to come.

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