**Lecture 4**

**Medieval culture of Central Asia. Cultural heritage of the Turks**

1) Turkic culture in the Middle Ages. Urban culture, material culture in the Karakhanid Khanate.

2) al-Kashgari and his role in the formation of Turkic literature and language.al-Farabi: philosophical, socio-ethical and aesthetic views.

3) Sufism as a powerful religious movement in Central Asia before the Mongol invasion.

**Turkic culture in the Middle Ages. Urban culture, material culture in the Karakhanid Khanate.**

On the vast territory of Kazakhstan, since ancient times, there have been large historical and cultural regions, characterized by a settled life. But in the Middle Ages those regions have turned into urban life style.

The cities in the valleys of the Syr-Darya, Talas, Chu, Ili rivers such as Isfidjab, Otrar, Taraz, Sygnak, Yangikent, Suyab, Kayalyk, Mirki, Kulan have been the centres of culture, religion, trade, and communication between agricultural oases and nomadic steppe between East and West on the Great Silk Road.

The settlements had consisted of three parts - a citadel, a shahristan and a rabad.

The *citadel* is the most fortified central part of a city or fortress, adapted for independent defence, or the kind of refuge of defenders during an assault. The citadels of the cities housed the palaces of the rulers, the interior of which was decorated with paintings, clay carvings and carved wood.

*Shahristan* is the central nucleus of the city (the residence of the ruler and nobility), including the citadel and walls.

*Rabad* is suburban craft settlements located outside of shakhristan. The remains of blocks of 11th - early 12th centuries have been discovered in the southeastern part of the Kuyruktobe settlement, which located on the Syrdarya river. In each of them, there were respectively from 8 to 10 houses. One of the excavated quarters of the city had a craft specialization – apparently, it was inhabited by potters.

The *mosque* is a new element in the structure of urban development of this particular period. The mosques and its location in the city have been necessarily mentioned in the writings of 9th – 12th centuries. The bazaar and trading buildings played an essential role in the life of the town.

In the 10th – 12th centuries, the first *baths* appeared in the cities of South Kazakhstan. The construction of *baths* began in Central Asia. In large cities, there were several dozens of *baths*. The *bathhouse* occupied a prominent place in several public buildings. Two baths of the 11th – 12th centuries have been excavated in Rabad of Otrar city.

In the houses of the 12th-13th centuries which continued the traditional line of development of the South Kazakhstan city-dwelling, a new type of *fireplaces* (*hearth*) had appeared. They were round and rectangular braziers, richly decorated with floral and geometric patterns.

The growth in the number of cities, their territorial expansion, and an increase in the number of urban population affected the further development of the *ceramic craft*. In connection with it, *glazed ceramics* had appeared. The most common types of products were decanters, jugs, bowls, mugs, and bottles.

The manufacture of glass products was increasing as well. The glass has been primarily used to produce window discs. According to the excavations in the quarters of potters, in the 11th-12th centuries, small craft workrooms had developed. There was a narrow specialization of them, and potters were mostly united in small workroom organizations.

*Blacksmithing* was one of the essential jobs in the city. The production of copper products was widespread in cities almost everywhere.

Primarily since the development of poly metals, those who engaged in copper metal was located not far from the urban centres in Karatau, Talas, Zailiysky and Dzhungarsky Alatau. Coppersmiths made dishes, chiragi (lamp), and stands, having been performing as jewellers as well.

The transit trade along the Silk Road played an essential role in the development of cities and urban culture. The exact placement of cities shows their connection to the trade routes. Trade was one of the vital factors in the development of the town. Three main directions converged in the city: trade a) between countries, b) between handicrafts and agriculture (the city and its districts), c) between the town and the nomadic steppe.

In the 9th- 13th centuries, the Silk Road from West to East was still actively functioning. The largest trade centres have been Ispidzhab, Keder, Otrar and Yangikent in the south of Kazakhstan; Taraz and Balasagun in the southwest; Talgar and Kayalyk in the north-eastern Semirechye

The flourishing of azakhstan's medieval urban culture has been interrupted by the aggressive campaigns of the *Mongol troops* which took place at the beginning of the 13th century. The traditional ties between the cities and the nomadic steppe have been devastated. But by the middle of the 13th century, a revitalization of city life has occurred; economic ties of regions were reviving; cities were being drawn into the orbit of international trade and diplomatic relations. The revival of the economic life of South Kazakhstani cities has been evidenced by numismatic material.

In the middle of the 13th century, the Otrar mint begins to work intensively, where gold *dinars* were minted first, then it was followed by silver-plated *dirhams*, as well as copper *fels*. The minted money has provided not only a local trade using money as a tool but also interregional trade. In addition to Otrar, Kendzhde and Jend produced cash products. In the middle of the 13th century, new urban centres arose and developed on the international caravan routes, such as Saraichik on the Ural River as well as Sairan, Saudakent, Baruket, Kumkent, Suzak and others.

The annexation of the southern regions of Kazakhstan to the *Timur Empire*, the stabilization of the political situation had contributed to the revival of economic and cultural life. The construction of splendid complexes such as Ahmed Yasavi and the Arslan-Bab mosque has played an essential role in the rise of Turkestan, Karnak, and Otrar. Also it has influenced the concentration of large masses of troops in Otrar, Yasy, and Sauran, and, as a consequence, the revival of interregional trade.

**al-Kashgari and his role in the formation of Turkic literature and language.al-Farabi: philosophical, socio-ethical and aesthetic views.**

The creators of the most massive monuments of the Turkic language and literature, *Yusuf Balasagunsky and Mahmud al-Kashgari* had lived and worked in the Middle Ages, during the period of the Karakhanid state. Yusuf was born in Balasagun approximately in 1015 or 1016. He came from a noble Turkic family and obtained a good education. It is also known that Yusuf took the position of a minister at the ruler’s court of the eastern part of the Karakhanid state. He is an author of the poem *Kutadgu Bilig*, written in 1069-1070. The poem was translated into Russian as “Science to be happy”, or “Blessed knowledge”. This book is a comprehensive work in the Turkish language. It is supposed to be a political treatise with a philosophical understanding of the worldview, the meaning of life, the place and role of man in society, and nature, etc. *Yusuf Balasagunsky* wrote in the preface to the poem that it was written in Turkic words. He also indicates that “if there are many such books in Arabic and Tajik, then this is the first book of wisdom in our language.” *Graceful knowledge* is an ethical and moral treatise with a deep philosophical and didactic meaning. According to the author, it sets out the norms of the ideal, society, the rules of behaviour of people of different classes, the relationship between the ruling and the ruled. The basic principles upon which a *happy* and *righteous* ruler should have an observance of the law is the *union with the intelligence and happiness of a righteous life*.

*Mahmud al-Kashgari* (1029-1101) is the author of the essay about the language, folklore, and ethnography of the Turkic tribes. He came from the upper strata of the Karakhanid nobility, and received an excellent education in Kashgar, Bukhara, and Nishapur. His book “Divan lugat at-Turk” (The Dictionary of Turkic dialects) is a Turkic encyclopaedia, written in 1072-1074. It contains and summarizes historical, cultural, ethnographic and linguistic material. It also includes the main genres of the Turkic-speaking folklore - songs, epics, traditions, legends, more than 400 proverbs, sayings and oral sayings.

Notably, Kashgari’s dictionary is invaluable and the only source of information about the life of the Turks in the Middle Ages. It narrates about the material culture of the Turks as follows:

a) clothes, shoes, hats, dwellings, household utensils, tools, outbuildings, fabrics, ornaments, weapons, armour, horse harness, agricultural implements, and musical instruments;

b) the knowledge about ethnonyms and toponyms, tribal division, about the terms of kinship and its properties and the titles of various officials. c) there have been data about the names of food and drink. It includes data about domestic and wild animals and birds, terms of animal husbandry, about plants and cereals;

d) about astrological terms, the folk calendar, names of months and days of the week;

e) about geographical names, cities;

f) the words of diseases and drugs, anatomical terminology;

g) metals and minerals;

h) about the military, sports and administrative language;

i) the terms of historical and mythological heroes, about religious and ethical vocabulary;

j) about children’s games and amusements, etc.

The development of medieval culture has been proved by the scientific activity of philosopher, encyclopaedic scientist, a native of Otrar (Farab) city *Abu Nasr Muhammad ibn Tarkhan Ibn Uzlag al-Farabi at-Turki* (870-950). Farabi was engaged in philosophy, mathematics, geodesy, architecture, and music theory, and is known for research in the field of *ethics*. Farabi obtained the title *Mu-Allim Assana - Second Teacher* (Aristotle is to be meant the first teacher). Farabi made an independent contribution to the science of *logic*. In his younger years, he left his hometown. He visited almost all cities related to the culture and science of the Middle and Near East - Bukhara, Merv, Alexandria, Cairo, Damascus, and Baghdad. Farabi died in Damascus. He has been a scientist, a world-class thinker; he brought together and synthesized the achievements of the Arab, Persian, Greek, Indian, and Turkic cultures. He left behind works such as *The Big Book of Music*, *Word on the Classification of Sciences*, The *Gems of Wisdom*, and *Treatise on the views of the Residents of the Virtuous City*. Farabi’s manuscripts are available in many libraries around the world, and the science of his heritage took shape in the *Farabi studies*.

**Sufism as a powerful religious movement in Central Asia before the Mongol invasion.**

**Sufism**, [mystical](https://www.britannica.com/topic/mysticism) [Islamic](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Islam) belief and practice in which Muslims seek to find the truth of divine love and knowledge through direct personal experience of God. It consists of a variety of mystical paths that are designed to [ascertain](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ascertain) the nature of humanity and of God and to [facilitate](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/facilitate) the experience of the presence of divine love and wisdom in the world.

Islamic [mysticism](https://www.britannica.com/topic/mysticism) is called taṣawwuf (literally, “to dress in wool”) in [Arabic](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Arabic-language), but it has been called Sufism in Western languages since the early 19th century. An abstract word, Sufism derives from the Arabic term for a mystic, ṣūfī, which is in turn derived from ṣūf, “wool,” plausibly a reference to the woollen garment of early Islamic [ascetics](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ascetics). The Sufis are also generally known as “the poor,” fuqarāʾ, plural of the Arabic faqīr, in Persian darvīsh, whence the English words fakir and dervish.

By educating the masses and deepening the spiritual concerns of the Muslims, Sufism has played an important role in the formation of Muslim society.

Originating in the 9th century on the territory of Iraq, Sufism, which later had a strong influence on the cultural history of Central Asia, spread in the 11th-12th centuries to Maverannahr (Transoxiana), which includes the southern regions of modern Kazakhstan. Under Soviet rule, Sufi brotherhoods were banned. Their very existence was denied at the official level, but the activities of Sufi sheikhs still persisted. On the Kazakh land, this Islamic movement gained distribution thanks to the influence of Arab-Persian culture and eastern poetry. Due to the inherent flexibility and capacity of Sufism, he harmoniously merged into the Kazakh belief system that existed in pre-Islamic times. A feature of Kazakhstani Sufism is a strong connection with shamanism, which for example led to the appearance of a loud dhikr with singing and dancing. In short, Sufism is a way of understanding reality, a teaching not only about who a person is, but about how he should ideally be. Sufism has become popular primarily due to the preaching of abstinence and asceticism.

A significant place in the cultural life of the population was occupied by the works of the Sufi poets, that is the preachers of the cult of Islam. Among these writers, the most prominent was *Khoja Akhmet Yassavi*, a preacher of Islam of the 11th-12th centuries. The most famous and popular work of Ahmed Yassavi was Book of Wisdom – “Divani Hikmet” created in Turkic language. This book was so popular among ordinary people that many young people learned and recited his poems by heart. Elders assessed maturity of young people by knowledge of Khodja Ahmed’s book. Ordinary people called this book as Second Book or “Korany Turky” i.e., second great book after the Koran or Turkic Koran.

Today Sufi leaders, communities, and sites have frequently been targeted by acts of violence perpetrated by extremist groups in different parts of the world.

Pakistan has seen considerable violence aimed at Sufi targets, with dozens of shrines bombed and prominent Sufis attacked. In February 2017, ISIS claimed responsibility for an [attack](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/16/thirty-killed-100-injured-isis-bomb-sufi-shrine-pakistan-sindh) on the Shahbaz Qalandar shrine in the southern Pakistani city of Sehwan in which 88 people were killed and hundreds wounded. A celebrated and popular Pakistani performer of Qawwali devotional music from the Sufi tradition, Amjad Sabri, was [gunned down](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-36603847) in Karachi in 2016 in an attack claimed by a faction of the Pakistani Taliban.

In Egypt’s restive Sinai region, a [deadly assault](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/24/world/middleeast/mosque-attack-egypt.html) on a Sufi mosque in the town of Bir al-Abed in November 2017 saw over 300 people killed and at least a 120 injured in what is widely believed to be an attack carried out by the ISIS affiliate that has waging an insurgency in the region. In November 2016, the same group claimed responsibility for the [execution](http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2016/11/19/ISIS-Egypt-branch-executes-100-year-old-Sufi-cleric.html) of Sheikh Sulaiman Abu Haraz, a symbolic Sufi spiritual leader and elder in the Sinai region.

The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom’s [Annual Report for 2017](http://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/2017.USCIRFAnnualReport.pdf) highlights the challenges faced by Sufis belonging to the Nematollahi Gonabadi Sufi order in Iran, who “continue to face a range of abuses, including attacks on their prayer centres and husseiniyas (meeting halls); destruction of community cemeteries; and harassment, arrests, and physical assaults of their leaders.”