

Section 2. Film, television and other screen arts

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FROM THE HISTORY OF CENTRAL ASIA CHILDREN'S CINEMA KAZAKH FILM DIRECTOR ABDULLA KARSAKBAEV (1926–1983)

*Makhsura Takhirovna Mirzamukhamedova*¹

¹ Institute of Art Studies, Uzbekistan

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Abstract

The article “Kazakh film director Abdulla Karsakbaev” is from the research work “Central Asia Children’s Cinema.” It is dedicated to the work of director A. Karsakbaev, who played a major role in the formation of children’s cinema in Kazakhstan. He began his activities in the 1960s, creating films for children and teenagers. In the article studied films dedicated to the school theme “My Name is Kozha” (1963), “Alpamis Goes to School” (1977), etc. About the relationship between pupil and teacher, working with child-actors, and his methodic.

Keywords: *cinematography, film director, image, culmination, tradition, film; information about author*

Introduction

The second half of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960 years are marked by the full-blooded developing and mastering of various genres of Kazakh live-action films. In a short time become widely such films of different genres known as “Botagoz” (directed by E. Aron, 1957), “His Time will Come” (director M. Begalin, 1957), “Our Dear Doctor” (director Sh. Aymanov, 1957), “Traces go Beyond the Horizon” (director M. Begalin, 1963), “The Beardless Deceiver” (“Aldar-Kose”) (director Sh. Aymanov, 1964), “My Name is Kozha” (director A. Karsakbaev, 1963), etc.

“The name of film director Abdulla Karsakbaev, the director of the non-totalitarian

historical-revolutionary film “Anxious Morning” (1966), is associated for many modern filmmakers and viewers, first of all, with children’s cinema in Kazakhstan and film classics: “My Name is Kozha”, “Alpamis goes to school”, – wrote Kazakh film expert, professor Bauirzhan Nogerbek (Bauyrzhan Nogerbek, 2008, p. 190).

Actually, with the creation of such films for adults as “Anxious Morning” (1966), “My Brother” (1972), “Pursuit in the Steppe” (1979), A. Karsakbaev played a significant role in the formation of children’s cinema in Kazakhstan.

A. Karsakbaev, after graduating from Art School in 1946, worked as an actor at a studio

in Alma-Ata and participated in dubbing. In 1950, he entered All-Russian State Institute of Cinematography named after S.A. Gerasimov at the directing department, graduated in 1956. Karsakbaev's thesis "Folk craft of the Kazakhs", which consisted of two parts, was a participant in the decade of 1958.

The work of film director Abdulla Karsakbaev has been almost unresearched. Apart from the thoughts of Doctor of Art Sciences, Professor K.K. Paramonova about the film "My Name is Kozha" and film critic K. Siranov, who positively assessed this film, almost nothing has been published about it in film studies literature.

And a deeply study of the work of the talented director, who directed such films for children as "My Name is Kozha", "Journey to Childhood" (1968), "Hey You Cowboys!" (1974), "Alpamis Goes to School" (1977), "Salt River of Childhood" (1983) would make it possible to identify the traditions that have emerged in children's cinema in Kazakhstan and the patterns of its development.

In the work of A. Karsakbaev children's themes are not randomly. He began his creative career with the first Kazakh feature film for children, "The Winged Gift" (1958) – about the useful deeds of young naturalists on a collective farm, working as a second director. Subsequently, in his independent works, he tries to reveal amazing characters and create images of brave, determined little citizens.

In the film "My Name is Kozha," based on the story of the same name by children's writer B. Sokpakbaev, the director sought to create a bright, unique image of a teenager. The fertile soil that formed the basis of the film gave strength to the screen development of the work of art.

In the film traced the complex relationships of a schoolboy named Kozha with the people around him. He lives with his mother and grandmother in one of the Kazakh villages (aul). He has no close friends at school, and he isn't always on good terms with the girl for whom he has tender feelings; all actions committed with good intentions turn against him; with the lazy Sultans' friendship brings trouble.

The main conflict in the film is the clash between teacher Kh. Maykanova and pupil Kozha. The director introduces the viewer into this clash, which gradually develops into

an acute conflict and creates a tense atmosphere, from the very first frames. The film is structured in such a way that the main events unfold with the participation of Kozha and the events, help to identify some features of the teenager's still unformed, contradictory character. But by loading the film with events, saddled the hero with a mountain of unpleasant stories, in which he was directly or indirectly a participant, the authors were overly carried away by entertainment. In this regard, Doctor of Art Sciences, Professor K.K. Paramonova was right, who noted:

"However, there are so many of these complications that it would hardly be easy for an adult to understand them, and even for a child – much less" (Paramonova K.K., 1967. p. 120).

Complicating events, with each frame the director puts the sixth-grader in a difficult position: his behavior is discussed twice at the Teachers' Council. There is a looming danger of expulsion from school. For what? The viewer doesn't feel major guilt for Kozha, especially since, as it turns out at the teachers' meeting, he studies without "3" grades (GPA= C grade, means "satisfactory"). When the essence of the matter is clear to the viewer, and the characters discuss it for a long time, accuse him of, frankly speaking, no one knows what, the film loses its impact.

However, in the film "My Name is Kozha" touched on an important issue – the relationship between pupil and teacher.

So, what should be like a modern teacher? With the instillation of knowledge,

"...he/she (teacher – M.M.) must help the pupil learn to think independently," – wrote then the master of children's cinema I. Frez, "to find and awaken the dormant abilities in him" (Fpez, I., 1975. p. 56).

On this matter opinions, reflections, discussions are needed. Just as the renewal of generations is a natural process of life, so teaching methods and the relationship between teacher and pupil not a dogma. Only a subtle and careful attitude towards the pupil's personality is always relevant. Only before a teacher who has become a true friend will pupil open his heart and entrust his most secret things. Such teachers, in keeping with the spirit of the times, sometimes appear on the screen.

The teacher of the 1960s in Kazakh cinema is Rakhmanov from the film "My Name is

Kozha”, who went through the Second World War, restrained and wise with life and professional experience. Rakhmanov has his own view on education – to raise a Man with a capital letter, no matter who they become in the future, and his own motto – “To light a torch in the pupil’s heart.” This is the only person in the film who understands Kozha and believes in him.

Kozha has a good beginning in the soul. A good start would be to develop it for an adult, to protect it from the “unpleasant wind.” In the film it is developed by the example of the father – the older generation.

Sometimes human memory is more powerful than visual images. A noble deed, a good deed, and courage live forever in the hearts of human. Kozha’s father Rakhmanov was remembered as a front-line comrade, courageous, despite being seriously wounded, resistant to adversity, and a modest person. The nobility of a fellow villager is still kept in his heart by the school watchman. His story about the person closest to him shakes the teenager’s soul.

Evening. It got dark. A one-story school in one of the villages of Kazakhstan. There is no one in the school yard. But bright windows from electric light bulbs “notify” about something important. There is a Teachers’ Meeting in the teachers’ room. The state of the mother, summoned to discuss her son’s behavior, is understandable.

And there is a conversation no less useful than at the teachers’ meeting in the courtyard, on a bench over a cup of tea. Here Kozha listens with greed and pride to the school watchman’s story about his own father, about his noble deed, which was able to forgive a person.

“Your hair is strong, like your father’s,” stroking the boy’s head, the watchman remembers Kozha’s father. Suddenly the teenager’s eyes light up, he is interested in learning, hearing about his father:

“Did you know him?” he asks excitedly.

Then Kozha will hear from teacher Rakhmanov that he fought with his father, courageous and patient.

Unobtrusively, casually spoken words have a better effect than any kind of moralizing and long discussions.

True, Kozha’s correction does not happen instantly; upbringing requires time, caution and patience. Understanding a person, the ability to get into his position, and identifying talent in time is a subtle art. In the film Kozha has not yet performed any useful deeds or feats. But the viewer believes that next to such a mentor as Usman Rakhmanov will grow from his a man useful to society.

Director A. Karsakbaev through the image of Usman Rakhmanov expressed his life position, cleverly performed by K. Kozhabekov. The performance of adult actors in children’s films requires deeply research.

In the film the actor is the main character; a lot depends on his convincing performance, his merging with the role, and his creative approach to the image. Spent a lot of time of typecasting, choosing an actor for a role only based on external similarity or beauty. At the modern stage, there is a need for a personality actor with rich life experience. If the director’s solution to the image is enriched with new colors, “living blood” – the performance of a thinking actor, then in relation to child actors the situation is different.

A film for children is a director’s film. If in an adult film the actors add their own, individual interpretation of the image, then in a children’s film the performance of a child actor completely depends on the director – on his professionalism and high pedagogical skills. Behind the natural, emotional, lively performance of a child or teenager always lies the director’s ability to work with children. Therefore, the performance of child actors certainly reflects the director’s face.

In this very first independent feature film, Karsakbaev’s ability to work with children, understanding their psychology, and pedagogical knowledge are clearly noticeable. In the game of two non-actor schoolchildren, he managed to create surprisingly bright, original characters. The director’s merit is the children’s transmission of inner feelings, emotions, rich facial expressions, supported by action. In the play of teenagers, the viewer doesn’t notice the falseness or dryness.

If a writer, with the help of artistic words, creates on paper a represented image, then the director of a children’s film expresses his talent, his thoughts, thoughts through child-actors. Charges them with what he

thinks about, transferring the real world into an imaginary one. At the same time, a lot depends on creating a creative atmosphere in the team, high spirits in each participant in the film. And here an individual approach to a child or teenager is very important.

“We shoot children, first of all, having studied their character well,” said director A. Karsakbaev in 1980 in a conversation with the author. – If you criticize, some people will get pouty. Then you know that you need to gradually speak and explain to them. Some children are self-proud, you just need to hurt them. In general, in each case it is necessary to act individually” (A. Karsakbaev, 1980).

The acting of the children was most successful in the film – non-professional actors – Nurlen Segizbaev (Kozha) and Marat Kokenov (Sultan). The image of the Sultan is interestingly resolved – a negative character, embellished with soft irony. It combines elements of the comedy and adventure genres. If in two teachers – Rakhmanov and Maykanova – there is a clear distinction between positive and negative characters, then in the images of teenagers everything is intertwined, as in life. You can find flaws in the character of the main character, and vice versa in the negative. Being carried away by the screen life of the Sultan, it is impossible to predict the schoolboy in him who created this image. The plasticity, spontaneity, and relaxedness of Marat Kokenov gave the image vibrant colors. Twice taller than his “friend” Kozha, Sultan can win his trust with cunning, a romantically upbeat character, and captivating words.

Director A. Karsakbaev made full use of all his professional knowledge in the film “My name is Kozha”. It is difficult to immediately determine the style inherent in this particular director among the many visual techniques. In the sum of visual means, techniques – internal monologue, mirror photography, animation (in the transfer of dreams), one can noticeably feel the director’s inclination towards a poetically sublime style, which later became the main thing in his work. The director did not refuse to show the beautiful landscapes and nature of his native land in the future. They, perhaps, have become dominant among other components that develop action in films such as “Hey You, Cowboys!”, “Alpamis Goes to School.”

The film “My Name is Kozha” was awarded an Honorable Diploma at the Cannes International Film Festival in 1967.

“Alpamis Goes to School” is one of the successful films created during the stagnant years. And in this film, director A. Karsakbaev remained faithful to showing the modern life of children in Kazakh villages. The action of the film, just like in the film “My Name is Kozha,” begins on the start of the new school year. The duration of the action is specified, it ends with the celebration of Teacher’s Day.

The storyline of the film is simple: the interest, desire, dream of a six-year-old boy, Alpamis, to study, who didn’t get into school due to his age. But the dream is eventually realized through the boy’s hard work.

The study of a child’s opportunities through artistic cinematography confirms the right direction of director A. Karsakbaev.

“Twenty years of experience working with them (six-year-olds – M.M.) convinced me: they show a stronger interest in learning than seven-year-old children,” – confirmed the famous at the time teacher, Professor Sh. Amonashvili (Amonashvili Sh., 1984).

It is no coincidence that the problems of the school became the problems of cinema art. Become a friend, an intelligent comrade, cinema in every era created images of young, brave, innovative teachers who sense the psychology, character, and individuality of the modern schoolchild. Children’s cinema, approaching the realities of life, had a confidential conversation with the young viewer not only about school affairs. This is the history teacher Ilya Melnikov from the Russian film “We’ll Live Until Monday” (directed by S. Rostotsky, 1968), whose lessons are “permeated with a creative atmosphere”; this is the literature teacher Marina Maksimovna from the film “The Key Without the Right of Transfer” (directed by D. Asanova, 1976), who became not only a mentor, but also a friend for her students, such is Batirzhan Batirkhanovich from the Kazakh film “Alpamis Goes to School.” This film raises the most pressing issues: problems of modernity and education, upbringing and continuity of generations.

Batirzhan Batirkhanovich, a young teacher, comes to a distant Kazakh village. Passionate about his work, he breathed life into the

empty school with irrepressible energy. The main character of the film is six-year-old Alpamis, who has not reached school age, but wants to learn to read and write. For hours he sits under the classroom window or watches from a tree as the teacher gradually introduces first-graders into the vast world of knowledge.

The viewer looks at the events taking place in the film through the eyes of a little hero who still has neither knowledge nor life experience. In acquiring them, in the course of action, others play a huge role. In a short period of time – a month – events that are difficult for Alpamis happen: and sadness, and separation, and the joy of learning. The cognition of life and the acquisition of knowledge by a little person goes through the work of the soul, through shocks.

The authors convince the viewer that learning is joy, a lesson is creativity. And joy and inspiration are achieved through talent, the search for a teacher, and his care and love for children. The spirit and demands of the time were subtly felt by the actor Zhaksen Kayirliiev, who created a slightly eccentric, spontaneous teacher who has retained a big, kind heart, who sees a good start in every work, in every undertaking of the children. This brings him closer to children. He quickly gains respect, even from the most mischievous Kalikhan, a friend of Alpamis, a year older than him.

Kalikhan is a boy with a unique character, looking for different adventures. In contrast to Alpamis, he is restless, he does not like going to school or doing homework. The ideas invented by Kalikhan turn out in his favor every time, as opposed to Kozha from the first film. For example, in the case of a snake (to scare the teacher), Batirzhan Batirkhanovich saw a good start. Here's how it was: a singing lesson is going on. The guys, led by a teacher who plays the button accordion, sing a cheerful song. The song, like a bird, flies far, far beyond the school. Everyone is in an elevated, elevated mood. At this time, the mischievous Kalikhan pulls out a snake from an iron box. But to his great surprise, the teacher was not afraid, but on the contrary, putting her in the cage of the living corner, he thanks a boy. So, with his sincere, respectful attitude, step by step, Batirzhan Batirkhanovich draws the fidget into his studies.

Some of the character traits of Kozha from the film "My Name is Kozha" are visible in the character and actions of Kalikhan. Apparently, the director needed such a nimble, active mischief-maker to show the teacher in the right direction of his activities.

Alpamis, unlike Kalikhan, is younger, calm, but obsessed with achieving his dreams. In the film he was played by a five-and-a-half-year-old boy, Ermek Tolepbaev.

"He has a good memory," – said director A. Karsakbaev then in a conversation with the author, – "he quickly memorized texts. We constantly played with him, creating in advance conditions that approximately matched the spirit, content, and emotional structure of the script."

This once again confirms the correctness of the developed methodology that work with young children in cinema possible with actively using their inclination to play, their spontaneity.

Talking about his method of working with children, the director said:

"We teach them a lot before filming. Even if they know how to swim or ride a horse, we still teach them again and identify their positive qualities."

That is why the characters and negative figures in A. Karsakbaev's films are very attractive. By actually depicting life on the screen, the director, during filming, cultivated moral and ethical qualities in the child actors, and helped them develop the positive qualities inherent in nature. Perhaps, during filming, Ermek Tolepbaev really learned to read, write, memorize the multiplication table and learn to ride a horse.

An important feature of A. Karsakbaev's work should be considered a poetic vision of the world with the identification of the national traits of the Kazakh people, it successfully combines modernity and national tradition. With the growth of professional skills and accumulation of life experience, A. Karsakbaev began to turn more often to folk wisdom. In the painting "Alpamis Goes to School" she is personified in the image of the noble old man Minar-Ata. His permanent place is the highest hill, from where the entire aul in the steppe is visible at a glance. Alpamis often resorts to him here. Minar-Ata gradually passes on his rich life experience

and folk traditions to his young friend. The Kazakh steppe and nature once taught this old man a lot.

– The steppe taught me to hear, think and see, – says Minar-Ata and closes his eyes. The camera films him from below: the proud, noble face of the old man rises up and up, turning him into the greatest image of the people...

In the film “Alpamis Goes to School” attempts to carefully confront a boy with life’s tragedy. It would seem that everything in the world is dialectical: there is no eternity in nature and in life, they are constantly in motion and development, in renewal, the old goes away, the new is born. Confronting the little man with the decline of the life of the mighty Minar-Ata, the sad cries of women can be heard from the screen – traditional elegiac improvisation, characteristic of the East, the director skillfully developing a sense of compassion and empathy, this is how he shows the relay of generations: an old woman with a saddle in a hands, approaches the boy stunned by grief:

– I told you to tell it, – she says in a trembling voice and hands him Minar-Ata’s saddle.

On the two-stringed national musical instrument kobuz sounds a sad melody, increasing the dramatism of happening.

Modernity and national tradition. These two sides of life, not very close to each other, in the film come into contact, or rather, merge in such a successfully found form – continuity of generations.

In films dedicated to a school theme, directed by A. Karsakbaev, pressing problems are raised not only of while time. They are relevant at all times.

The film “Alpamis Goes to School” was awarded the 1st Prize for the Best Children’s Film at the X-All-Union Film Festival in 1978.

Subsequently, the “wind of stagnant time” touched the last film of this director, “Salt River of Childhood” (1983), dedicated to the childhood of the war generation. It cannot be said that the interesting idea was adequately expressed brightly and convincingly in the style he chose. True, the film (written by B. Mansurov) is truly Kazakh, created on local material, the stormy and rapid river – Sirdarya – is the main character of the film. All sorts of adventures with Zeynolla’s

grandfather, his granddaughter Dariga and the boys Mukhtar and Amir take place on the river, in a sailing caique, in which salt, food products and mail are delivered to remote villages.

In the film, the atmosphere of the War Years is present everywhere. On the salt pier it is created on the external attributes of that time, in the climax scene – mourning (lament) in the house of the old woman Kulyash, who lost her husband and son, and now her daughter (Dariga hands her a letter from Amina’s fighting friends), the whole tragedy of the war is expressed by bitter mourning coming from within the human souls. The grief of one woman becomes the grief of all the women gathered here.

The film went unnoticed on the screen, despite such touching scenes and an interesting concept. Various adventures, sometimes dangerous, that happen along the way with the children without adults (they will lose their grandfather, who received an electric shock on the raft. The raft, caught on the wires, cannot break through), looks without tension. Reason: the intensity of events did not match the slow-pace of the film.

In the Kazakhfilm studio, which failed to maintain its previously won positions in the early 1980s, experienced a critical period – a decline in the artistic level of films and the creative activity of directors. According to Kazakh film expert Professor Bauyrzhan Nogerbek:

“The main factor in the creative stagnation of Kazakh feature films in these decades is the untimely death of the leading film directors of national cinema: Sh. Aymanov, M. Begalin, then S. Khodzhikov, A. Karsakbaev” (Bauyrzhan Nogerbek, 2008. p. 223).

The situation changed at the end of the 1980s, with democratic changes in society. Talented youth with a “different worldview” and “a different culture” came to Kazakh cinema. They started talking about a “new wave” in Kazakh cinema. True, it was not born out of nowhere, “the spiritual origins of truthful, free cinema were at one time clearly outlined in the works of the classics of Kazakh cinema Sh. Aymanov, M. Begalin, S. Khodzhikov, A. Karsakbaev...” (Bauyrzhan Nogerbek, 2008. p. 265).

Children’s films created by the talented film director Abdulla Karsakbaev occupy a

special place in the history of children's cinema in Kazakhstan.

A new generation of filmmakers (cinematographers) continues his work in new times and in new creative conditions.

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Contact: nigorahaydarova86@gmail.com