

HISTORICAL INFLUENCE OF “EAST OF NEW YORK, WEST OF KABUL” BY MIR TAMIM ANSARY.

Khamdamova Nilufar

Uzbek State University of World Languages
Graduate student of the Master's Degree Department

Abstract: The article deals with the historical influence of Mir Tamim Ansary's book "West of Kabul, East of New York", as well as the content of this memoir book.

Keywords: Afghanistan, American life, Muslim community, bestseller, textbooks.

The biography of Tamim Ansary and his literary works are interrelated directly, that is why, before researching each motif separately, it is beneficial to look through some important events from the biography of the writer. Tamim Ansary was born in Kabul in 1948. His father was a university professor who married an American English teacher who came to live with him in Afghanistan. Tamim Ansary describes this intercultural marriage on the opening pages of his memoir. "I was born into that world when it was virtually untouched by the West. I emphasize the word virtually. Some penetration had already occurred – my sister and I embodied it. Not only was our mother American; she was the only American woman in Kabul when she arrived there in 1945". Tamim Ansary is the author of the memoir "West of Kabul, East of New York", co-author with Farah Ahmadi of the New York Times bestseller *The Other Side of the Sky*, and has been a major contributing writer to several secondary school history textbooks. Ansary is director of the San Francisco Writers Workshop. He writes for *Encarta.com*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Salon*, *Alternet*, *Edutopia*, *Parade*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and other publications.

In his book "West of Kabul, East of New York", Ansary describes the country now as a mix of the 21st century and the 12th — but, he adds, there's something new emerging. On a recent visit to Afghanistan, he encountered villagers in remote areas with solar panels on their houses, powering television sets and satellite dishes. "Technology will not be held back; if you ask any man you see on the street, 'should girls go to school,' and some of these other traditional ideas, they would say 'oh yeah, yeah, we're firmly for that.' They're probably not completely aware of how the influx of information is wearing in on the attitudes they had held, and who knows how the mixture will produce in the years to come. But it's not going to be the way it was in the past." In this memoir Tamim Ansary reveals world history to us from a new perspective, focusing on the evolution of the Muslim community.

Literary works written by Tamim Ansary are based on his biographical facts and events from his own life. These are religion, history, and culture. "West of Kabul, East of New York: An Afghan American Story" is a literary memoir recounting Tamim Ansary's bicultural perspective on contemporary world. This life narrative and autobiographical writing on the context of war underlines much deeper issues than the previous novels that focused mainly on the theme of "war". This also concedes Tamim Ansary's 'life' writing a new role in public discourse which has formerly been underestimated. Moreover, "West of Kabul, East of New York: An Afghan American Story" is not only the story of a man negotiating his personal life. It is also the account of a writer finding his path in his profession as a journalist. Writing, in turn, not only constitutes an important theme in the memoir, it also allows for detailed insights into the writing process of a memoir at large.

From the very beginning of the account, Tamim Ansary embeds his personal memories in a very detailed historical framework. Most opening sentences in the chapters recall detailed descriptions of the political or historical circumstances surrounding a certain event or time period. This historical focus is introduced to the reader in the very first chapter of the book: "In 1948, when I was born, most of Afghanistan might as well have been living in Neolithic times. It was a world of walled villages, each one inhabited by a few large families, themselves linked in countless ways through intermarriages stretching into the dim historical memories of the eldest elders," Tamim Ansary writes¹⁰³. Contrary to the stereotypical notion of memoir as "I narrative," Tamim Ansary here rather talks about the world which he was born into than merely about himself. The tone and the pictorial scenery he creates make the reader easily slip into the very historical era

Tamim Ansary is describing. Again, this era is marked by severe differences to the present and to the cultural realm which Tamim Ansary and his readers live in. Most importantly, however, the author conveys information on two textual levels at the same time. The passage is not merely a description about the past as he records it, but a meta-depiction of the ways in which history is recorded in much broader terms. In the Afghanistan of his childhood, oral narrative was the basis of historiography, as Tamim Ansary's mentioning of the "dim historical memories of the eldest elders" reveals. This strong focus on history as another dominant frame in the narrative continues with Tamim Ansary's long descriptions of historical anecdotes he remembers from his childhood and their religious entanglement with Islam, the prophets, Byzantine, and different rulers of the Uman¹⁰⁴. Amidst this indulgence in historical analysis, Tamim Ansary makes the following observation: "All of human history can be seen, can it not, as an argument between those who try to explode the existing forms and those who try to freeze things as they are. The second impulse always wins in the end, except it's never the end. The cosmic winner is always change, except change can never settle in as the permanent state. History is a river, except people can live only in lakes, so they dam the current and build villages by still waters – but the dam always breaks" The author in this passage provides an insightful analysis of historiography and the power struggles involved in it. Human beings try to retain history, even "freeze" it; yet, they are never successful in doing so. History resists attempts of enforced stagnation, as he explains, and to a large extent writes itself.

The language Tamim Ansary employs here is severely metaphorical. The dynamics of history are presented as inescapable, as the metaphor of water as uncontrollable natural force suggests. The imagery of waters and dams, however, is not only used as a means of illustration. Instead, the landscape thus depicted is linked to the very economic and political history of Afghanistan. Tamim Ansary thus uses this passage to lead over to his narration of the specific history of the Helmand Valley in Afghanistan. As part of a larger development program, the United States of America in the 1960s funded an irrigation project in this area that is full of history, as Tamim Ansary explains. "About this land, certain stories were told, stories that went back a thousand years, to the days of the Ghaznavid Empire"¹⁰⁶. This ancient history then becomes part of Tamim Ansary's family history as well. Speculations mentioned above strikingly confirm the larger historical framework Tamim Ansary sets up in his memoir. This framework is deeply shaped by his awareness of the binary between East and West. In addition, his use of the term "Islamic world" points to the close entanglement of the historical frame with the religious focus Tamim Ansary pursues on his journey and in the narrative thereof. As is the case with the religious frame ruling the coverage of the Middle East in the media, the issues of religion, politics, and history also remain intertwined as Tamim Ansary pursues his literal and figurative life journey. History is never absent from any of his observations. With the framing of his own small story in larger historical terms, he actively works toward tutoring his audience. Eventually, his reading of history as power struggle, however, does not only dominate the historical frame of Tamim Ansary's narrative. Due to its far-reaching effects, it also permeates the issue of culture to a large extent, just like there can be no endings in writing and in the writing of life stories, as he suggests: "So you never know. That's what I have concluded. Even the past can change, depending on what happens next – or at least the meaning of the past can change, which is what counts. The pattern is never visible until it's over – and it's never over. Endings don't exist" p257. With this ending describing the denial of endings, Tamim Ansary leaves the reader with a seemingly paradoxical, yet, powerful piece of advice as to how to approach life and life writing. His emphasis on the changed meaning of the past resulting from different interpretive frames in his own story highlights the crucial function framing has in his narrative. As the framing analysis has revealed, the issue frame of history here gains prominence and shows the most intensive overlapping to some of the other frames. The most important indicator of this finding is the large amount of historical information Tamim Ansary provides throughout the narrative. He treats history as a key to understanding the past and the present, which clearly also affects the construction of other frames in the memoir.

Literature:

1. Annotation to the book "Shattered destiny. The history of the world through the eyes of Muslims"
<https://www.labirint.ru/books/825162/>

2. Ansary T. M. West of Kabul, East of New York: An Afghan American Story. – New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002. – P. 257
3. Ecklund K., Kham M. Attitudes towards Muslim Americans Post-9/11. Journal of Muslim Mental Health, 7(1), 2012. – P. 1-16.
4. El-Sayed A. Images of Muslims in Western Scholarship and Media after 9/11. Digest of Middle East Studies, 22(1), 2013. – P. 39-56.
5. Fakhry M. A History of Islamic Philosophy. Third edition. – New York: Columbia University Press, 2013. – 408 p.
6. O. Chuvakin., Western experts: The United States must not allow a repetition of the Soviet scenario in Afghanistan, 2017.

