

## Centering Bukhara in the Perso-Islamic Tradition

*Paper abstract submitted to the workshop "Intersections of history and literature in Central Asia" at AUCA, Bishkek, 29-31 August 2014.*

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This paper traces the rise of the city of Bukhara as a focal point of cultural and material exchange in Central Asia. From the second half of the eighteenth century through the beginning of the twentieth the Manghit dynasty consciously invested in Bukhara's infrastructure just as Islamic scholars simultaneously promoted the city as an "Abode of Knowledge" (*dar al-ilm*), imagined to be timeless and second only to Mecca in religious importance. As a result of these efforts, Bukhara became a regional center not reducible to the bounds of the khanate by the same name, which in fact controlled a very modest amount of territory. This process of "mythologization" was implemented by connecting the city's physical geography to sacred Islamic history as well as Persian literature such as the epic of kings (*Shahnama*). Bukhara was not the only Central Asian city-state to strive for such an elevated status and its eventual success in the popular imagination has obscured the histories of competitor "abodes of knowledge," such as Khoqand and Shahrīsabz. By the colonial period, however, the allure of Bukhara extended throughout Central Asia and into the Russian Empire, Afghanistan, and beyond.

## **Contested Canon: The Sino-Soviet Struggle for a Uyghur Poet's Memory**

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In the 1960s, as Sino-Soviet relations soured, the USSR's Uyghur-language media organs found the perfect poster boy for anti-Chinese propaganda. Lutpulla Mutellip (1922-45), a popular Uyghur poet who was born in the USSR but lived most of his life in Xinjiang, a predominantly Uyghur region in northwestern China, had been killed in 1945 during a local revolt against Chinese rule. Beginning in the early 1960s and crescendoing as relations between China and the USSR reached their nadir in the final years of the decade, Lutpulla Mutellip became Soviet propaganda's symbol for Chinese oppression of Xinjiang's Uyghur population. Poems, stories, novels, and articles commemorated Lutpulla's talent and bravery, and his tragic fate at the hands of the Chinese state. The odd thing was, though, that until the Cultural Revolution began in 1966, Lutpulla was simultaneously celebrated in China's Uyghur-language media as a national hero: a patriotic Chinese poet, a socialist Uyghur visionary, and a martyr for China.

This paper will seek to explain how and why this seemingly paradoxical situation developed, and will argue that canonical figures and works present both the possibility and the necessity of appropriation. Canon should be understood as a set of highly malleable symbols, which can be reconfigured to a greater or lesser extent in order to serve ideological needs; this creates the possibility of appropriation. At the same time, canon, once created, is not easily erased, and especially not in a short period of time; indeed, attempts to decanonize cherished figures and censor canonical works can often burnish their luster. Therefore, rapid ideological change cannot easily be accompanied by an overturning of the existing canon; moreover, the weight of existing canon is often needed to anchor the shaky foundations of any radically new order. This creates the necessity of appropriation.

These structural factors enable and motivate the appropriation of canon; but the process cannot be fully understood without considering the specific individuals who drive it forward. The Soviet discovery of Lutpulla Mutellip in the 1960s was enabled in part by the 1958-62 exodus from China to the USSR of a large number of disaffected Uyghur writers and intellectuals, many of whom shared hometown, social, and ideological ties with Lutpulla. These intellectuals played a major part in the exportation of Lutpulla's legend from China to the Soviet Union, and were eager to serve their new homeland by using Lutpulla's memory against the regime they had fled. This paper will analyze the central role that this type of personal, contingent factor inevitably plays in the creation, maintenance, and recreation of canon.

## **General Rakhimov's March to Berlin: Localising Soviet Army Propaganda for Central Asian Red Army Soldiers during the Second World War**

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From the very beginning of the war, the Soviet authority mobilised all local cultural institutions as well as the evacuated Russian and Ukrainian cultural elites for propaganda production in order to promote Soviet patriotism among the Uzbek population. The 1930s Soviet slogan of the 'Friendship of the Soviet Peoples' was reinterpreted by the Uzbek writers who attempted to merge the Soviet *rodina* ('motherland') with the Uzbek *el/yurt/o'tov* ('native community') together and make the Uzbek people in Central Asian *tyl* (home-front) to feel that they were a part of the Soviet Union. Meanwhile at the front, the Red Army which had been a predominantly Russian institute, learned to speak the languages of its non-Russian soldiers. In this process of *learning* the languages of others within, Soviet internationalism became a part of Central Asian national identity with which the Uzbek Red Army soldier marched across and beyond the Soviet *rodina*. This paper first explores the nationalised propaganda materials the Red Army produced to win the hearts of its non-Russian soldier. Then, it traces the Soviet hero narrative in Komil Iashen's 1949 play *General Rakhimov* which portrays the two final battles of Sabir Rakhimov, the first Uzbek Red Army General and the most-celebrated Uzbek war hero. The play reveals how the WWII established Soviet Central Asia as the 'Second-World' Asia, or the most advanced and free Asia.

## **History, Memory, and Postcolonial Identity in the Thaw-era Works of Olzhas Suleimenov**

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Central Asian literature is not often considered in the context of a watershed development in world history after the Second World War: rapid decolonization and the genesis of a new world order in which military and ideological alliances divided the globe into First, Second, and Third Worlds. This paper investigates the interrelated themes of postwar decolonization, postcolonial subjectivity, and Kazakh history in the Thaw-era works of Olzhas Suleimenov (b. 1937). Through an analysis of Suleimenov's autobiographical and historical poems such as "The Beginning of Happiness," "In Pushkin Square," "Lenin Street in Our Town," and "The Wild Field," I showcase the poet's earliest efforts to reconcile elements of a prerevolutionary Kazakh identity with an emerging Soviet one.

By analyzing Suleimenov's poems on the Soviet space program, Indian Independence, and the American Civil Rights Movement, I argue that his contributions to Soviet anticolonial literature not only coincided with, but also contributed to, the birth of postcolonial literature worldwide. I further argue that Suleimenov's use of Russian as a medium for the synthesis of postcolonial writing and Soviet anticolonial discourse paved the way for a sophisticated critique of Russocentric Soviet culture and power.

## **Iran and Turan from Myth to Modern Politics**

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Everything starts with Fereydun, the mythical king, dividing his empire among his sons. From then on, the antagonism of Iran and Turan runs like a thread through the Iranian epic Šāhnāmeḥ and Iran is in permanent conflict with his mythical enemy. The dichotomy of Iran-Turan is not the only dichotomy to define Iranian identity but probably the most famous one.

Neither was it a literary concept introduced by the poet Abu'l Qasem Ferdowsi (940-1020). Rather, it was known to the poet from myths handed down from ancient times where it had taken its origin in the antagonism of sedentary and nomadic peoples of the Eurasian steppes competing for the lands southwest of the river Amu Darya. Since then, it runs like a thread through the history of Western and Central Asia as well. However, the border between Iran and Turan never has been a totally impermeable one and there had been contacts and exchange between the two sides at any time in history.

After giving a summary of the narration of the Iran-Turan antagonism in Ferdowsi's Šāhnāmeḥ, the paper will trace the concept of Iran-Turan, the changes it underwent and the different connotations it took through the ages of history and finally show that it has left its mark even on the political situation of the region in modern times.

## **Like a River Wild in Flood': Literary Genealogy and the Politics of Poetic Speech in Kazakh Literature**

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*Paper abstract submitted to the workshop "Intersections of history and literature in Central Asia" at AUCA, Bishkek, 29-31 August 2014.*

This paper traces ideologies of poetic speech as they move through three literary and historical contexts: the poems of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Kazakh bard Dulat Babataiuly; the essays of the great turn of the century Kazakh poet and critic Abai Qunanbai; and the depiction of both writers in Mukhtar Auezov's 1948 novel *Abai Zholy (The Path of Abai)*, itself often considered the paradigmatic work of Kazakh prose fiction. Auezov grouped Babataiuly within a poetic genre he named *ZarZaman* (time of sorrow). This genre referred to the works of Kazakh *aqyns* (bards) who in the 19<sup>th</sup> century had composed poems that addressed the eclipse of the Kazakhs' traditional social structures by an ascendant Tsarist colonial administration and the encroachment of Russian settlers on Kazakh pasture lands. The poets of *Zar Zaman* wrote works that castigated not only Russian administrators but the Kazakh elite as indifferent to the obligations of kinship and community and as perverted by the lure of material wealth. In his novel *Abai Zholy*, Auezov describes a fictional visit by Babataiuly to the herding camp of Abai's family, where the young, book-educated Abai listens to the poetry of Babataiuly and comes to understand both the literary value of the Kazakh oral poetic tradition and the power of poetic speech to expose and thus contest the corruption of the colonial elite. Auezov thus crafted a literary genealogy in which Abai, and by extension Auezov himself, are the spiritual heirs of the 19<sup>th</sup> century *Aqyns* (bards). Close examination of the texts of works by Babataiuly and Abai, however, reveals that this genealogy elides the differences between each author's distinctive views of the politics of poetic speech: in Babataiuly's work, the poet emerges as a defiantly public figure whose performances serve to expose the material impact of colonial policy on mobile-pastoral practices, while Abai consciously rejects questions of economics and presents his written literature as a quintessentially silent excavation of his own soul.

## **Punk Shamanism, Revolt and Break Up of Traditional Linkage: The waves of cultural awakening in post-Soviet Kazakhstan**

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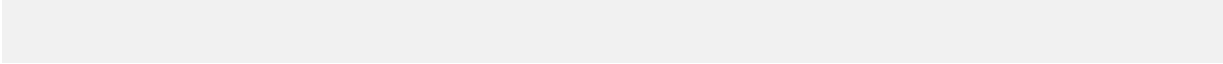
This paper's main focus is the analysis of the literary and artistic narratives of the nation and national in Kazakhstan. Spanning from early traditions of "survivor" Alash post-1930s Stalinist terror generation and first works of Mukhtar Auezov to Kazakh Literary Renaissance in 1960s and 1970s to contemporary Kazakh literary and art scene, the paper analyses the change of following categories in cultural production: "imagined geographies" – the narration of territory, symbolism of soil and beauty of 'magic steppe' landscapes, Kazakh language and heritage as well as narratives of oppression. In this work I question how different generations of Kazakh intellectuals and cultural producers imagined and re-imagined various narratives in same categories. Following the hypothesis of historical linkage between different generations and facilitation of ideas, works and narratives from one generation to another first in the form of oral histories and then in the form of written literary narratives, I trace how the content of national categorizations were changing throughout three-four generations. What type of contexts and elites' networks or on the contrary, elitist competition and conflicts produced at first very strong linkages between generations of intellectuals and then, after the collapse of Soviet Union, gradually to the break up of these linkages?

Situating my work specifically in post-Soviet cultural and literary production I trace the developments of various generations of artists and public intellectuals in their re-consideration of traditional linkages. Revolt, opposition and resistance to the traditional paradigm of gender, ethnicity and even religion became the focus of younger generations of writers and artists in post-Soviet Almaty. During the short period of independence the Kazakh cultural field produces wide range of political art. Saule Suleimenova, one of the prominent Kazakh artists denies Olzhas Suleimenov's paradigm of lineage and kinship, Almagul Menlibayeva, famous Kazakhstani artist invents Punk shamanism and challenges male perspective on gender in her work "Bride" as well as challenging official discourses on Soviet tragedies with her new works on "KARLAG" camp, Said Atabekov portrays the "commercialized" side of traditional Kokpar games in Shymkent dismissing the argument for heritage and cultural costume-ization and spectacularization of national identity. Finally, Kazakhstani Internet sphere produces "Mankurtstan" fiction novel staged in 2035 structures the notion of lost nation and lost heritage rather than re-imagining it as much as Takezhan's video "Kazakhstan 2050" demonstrates the same interplay of lost nation and lost heritage symbolically linking it to the official ideology of Kazakhstan-2030 and Kazakhstan-2050 programs.

The paper offers analysis for 1) elite networks and linkage from Soviet to post-Soviet intellectual field arguing that the break ups do not exactly depend on the break up of regimes and ideologies (from Soviet to post-Soviet) but depend on various socio-cultural contexts;



2) narratives and categories of nation: from ethno-nation to civic cosmopolitan ideas; 3) and finally the paper analyses the context of authoritarian state under which the cultural production is structured.



## **Revolutionary Springtimes: Reading Soviet Tajik Poetry, from Ghazal to Lyric**

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The late 1930s and the 1940s in the Soviet Union saw a polemical campaign for the “right to the lyric.” The article argues that this strand of Stalinist literary-critical discourse provided a tool for Tajik writers as they articulated a neoclassical Persian poetics. Previously preferred agitational forms gave way by the late 1930s to a full revival of the ghazal as an indigenous basis for a “style of socialist feelings.” By the 1950s, however, the aesthetics of the lyric transformed the practice of the Tajik ghazal beyond recognition.

This article, then, traces the development of the ghazal/lyric mode and form in order to show how Persianate and Soviet conceptions of genre functioned in these peripheral poets’ active adoption, translation, and repurposing of rhetoric from the center, through close readings of ghazals or lyrics from the Revolution to the Thaw.

Keywords: Tajik, Socialist Realism, ghazal, lyric, ‘Aynī, Lāhūtī, Tūrsūnzāda

## **The Universal and Particular of Central Asian Parricides**

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Central Asia's history of modern dramaturgy begins with Mahmudho'ja Behbudiy's rather laconically titled *Padarkush (The Parricide)* (1914). With its eponymous murder, Behbudiy hits on a theme that would trouble Central Asians for the duration of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Parricide and fatherlessness appear in several Central Asian works over the course of these 100 years, and in many instances they are connected with the perils that have accompanied the entry of modernity into the region. While modernity can have many meanings, I find Arjun Appadurai's characterization the most applicable to an examination of Central Asian parricide: "the central feature of global culture today is the politics of the mutual effort of sameness and difference to cannibalize one another and thus to proclaim their successful hijacking of the twin Enlightenment ideas of the triumphantly universal and the resiliently particular" (43). Parricide is inextricably connected to the experience of modernity in that it represents a battle between the universal and the particular. Sons, or the younger generation, in these works are confronted with the conflicting goals of embracing progress and integrating themselves into the conception of the universal European man while simultaneously remembering and honoring their particular cultures and histories, represented by the father or older generation. Failure to manage these two tasks together results in parricide and cultural extinction, i.e. end of a people through assimilation or extermination.

This paper develops a theoretical background for the study of parricide and modernity through Freud and other thinkers before exploring how three Central Asian authors have addressed the linkage between the two. Mahmudho'ja Behbudiy, Odil Yoqubov, and Chingiz Aytmatov in their respective works *Padarkush*, *Ulug'bek xazinasi* (1974), and *Burannyi polustanok ili dol'she veka dlitsia den'* (1980) each layout the modern dilemma of parricide and offer methods of understanding and coping with that "mutual cannibalization."

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## Abstract

“Voices of Azerbaijani IDP/Refugee Women and the Nagorno-Karabakh War:  
Maintaining Homeland Identity through Storytelling and Poetry”

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As a faculty member at the University of Kansas, I have had the opportunity during the past twelve years to engage in extensive academic activities in the Republic of Azerbaijan, for periods ranging from several weeks during summers to several full semesters during academic years. These activities have been facilitated by various sources, including a Fulbright Scholar Award, two Fulbright Senior Specialist Awards, two American Councils for International Education Research Fellowships, IREX and NCEEER Grants, and an American Philosophical Society Franklin Research Grant.

My research during this span of years has included extensive fieldwork on various issues pertaining to social change and Azerbaijani women. In doing so, I have used qualitative interdisciplinary humanistic methodologies to conduct dialogues with Azerbaijani women, in the native language of Azeri, and to compile narratives and oral histories. One element of my research focuses specifically on women who have been internally displaced (IDPs) or are refugees as a result of the Nagorno-Karabakh war between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Although this war, which began in the late 1980s has been under formal cease-fire since 1994, hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis continue to live in a state of displacement while hoping to return some day to their homeland of Nagorno-Karabakh and adjacent districts.

Historically, Azerbaijani-Armenian hostilities span more than a century, and it is important to place the current Azerbaijani-Armenian conflict in broader historical context. More specifically, even while Azerbaijan was part of Czarist Russia, conflict between Armenians and Azerbaijanis, including clashes in the Nagorno-Karabakh city of Shusha, became quite intense in 1905 and 1906, with several thousand Armenians and Azerbaijanis killed. Following the 1917 revolution in Czarist Russia, Azerbaijan gained independence and established a Democratic Republic (1918-1920). Yet,

Armenian-Azerbaijani ethnic tensions erupted again, between 1918 and 1920, with thousands of casualties on both sides. For most of the Soviet era, Armenian-Azerbaijani tensions remained relatively suppressed, in part because of the broader Soviet ideology that emphasized the primacy of a unified “Soviet identity” to the detriment of ethnic or other identities, and it was not until the late 1980s that the current Armenian-Azerbaijani ethnic hostilities escalated into a brutal armed conflict.

In this paper, I utilize a social constructionist theoretical framework that focuses on interpretive analysis with a social historical emphasis in focusing on the plight of Azerbaijani IDP/refugee women from this latest conflict: the 1988-1994 Nagorno-Karabakh war. In doing so, I rely on my extensive fieldwork in Azerbaijan, which includes both my collection of narratives from my dialogues with Azerbaijani IDP/refugee women as well as my collection of poetry, written by these women, pertaining to their experiences of displacement.

In my research, Azerbaijani IDP/refugee women convey their strong sense of homeland identity, determination, and resilience and the hope of returning to their homelands verbally through dialogues and as part of their oral histories. **Yet, particularly relevant to this paper, they also express these emotions and sentiments both verbally and in written form through storytelling and poetry.**

Indeed, Azerbaijanis possess a rich history of poetry, literature, and music, and the writing, reading, and recitation of poetry have long been a significant element in Azerbaijani culture. This heritage is reflected, for example, in the numerous monuments, parks, streets, and public buildings in Azerbaijan named after such prominent poets as Nizami (1141-1209), Fuzuli (1483-1556), Natavan (1830-1897), and Vurgun (1906-1956). Indeed, the Nagorno-Karabakh region—and the area of Shusha in particular—is frequently referred to as “the cradle” of Azerbaijani poetry and music because of the large number of cultural icons who were either born in Shusha or had other connections to Shusha.

Thus, the use of storytelling and of poetry by Azerbaijani IDP/refugee women is an extension of Azerbaijani culture, and such poetry written by both IDP/refugee women and men frequently recalls the beauty of their homelands, their family memories of growing up, their pain and anguish toward the war and toward the Armenian occupiers of their lands, and their longing to return to their homelands. Such storytelling and poetry reinforces the homeland identity of Azerbaijani IDP/refugee women, it is shared with children in IDP/refugee schools where it plays a significant role in the socialization of IDP/refugee children, and it also is shared with both children and adults in IDP/refugee community gatherings and at weddings, celebrations, and other social events. The following verse from the poem, *If I Could See Kelbajar Again*, refers to the occupied district of Kelbajar and is but one example:

*“See what I am going through,  
See the pain that I have,  
If I could drink its water, my internal fire would calm down,  
Light would come back to my eyes.  
If I could see Kelbajar again!”*

Yet, while poetry is a key factor in renewing and reinforcing collective identity, it also serves as a coping mechanism for many individual IDP/refugee women, as illustrated in the following excerpt from one of my dialogues:

“During the day, I work and somehow I forget a little about my pain and problems. But in the evenings, it is difficult because I get depressed and homesick. There is a poem that I whisper to myself:

*‘Evenings o evenings  
Candles light evenings  
Those who have home, go home  
Where do those go, who have none?’*

When I return home from work, I think of this poem.”

Azerbaijani IDP/refugee women’s enduring desire to return to their occupied homelands reflects both their strong local (homeland) identity as well as their broader national and cultural identity. Such identity, as reflected in my fieldwork, is reinforced and maintained through both social structural elements such as IDP/refugee schools and community gatherings as well as through vibrant cultural elements such as those connected to storytelling and to the writing and recitation of poetry about the homelands from which they have been displaced.

My research is unique in that it examines the state of being of Azerbaijani IDP/refugee women as voiced and expressed by these women through their own writings reflecting over two decades of displacement. Yet, the reading of this poetry and the understanding of the symbolic meanings embedded in the poetry requires fluency in the Azeri language as well as intimate knowledge of Azeri culture. In turn, I am uniquely qualified for this research because of my multi-lingual Persian/Azeri family heritage which has provided me with both fluency in the Azeri language and an intimate knowledge of Azeri culture and history.

Azerbaijani poetry is especially powerful as it crosses boundaries of age, gender, class, ethnicity, and region. It serves to reinforce their historical homeland identity, whether their homelands are towns and villages in Nagorno-Karabakh or towns and villages in the adjacent Azerbaijani districts still occupied by Armenia.

Through the interpretive analysis of IDP/refugee works of poetry, I examine the day-to-day life experiences of these women. For Azerbaijani IDP/refugee women, poetry is an especially powerful tool through which to convey their message and to maintain their homeland identity, and my analysis of these women’s poetry provides significant insights into the Azerbaijani history, collective memory, and identity.