

THIS IS A DRAFT – NOT INTENDED FOR CITATION

## **From Soviet Opera to Soviet Film: Replaying the Legend of *The Silk Maiden***

Filmic images of Central Asia in Soviet film reveal two patterns over the course of Soviet history. The first demonstrates a clear evolution of native (or local) interpretive lenses used to portray themselves. As Central Asians became more involved in the leadership and direction of their republic film studios, they sought new devices to represent their insights into the Soviet experience. The second indicates a consistent attitude towards the Soviet “east” from Moscow that was Orientalist in nature and evolved marginally from the ethnographic studies of early Soviet documentaries to the farces of Central Asia’s revolutionary past in Soviet historical dramas of the Brezhnev era. Despite the interconnectedness of Soviet cultural institutions (through the employment of varying nationalities at Central Asian film studios and co-productions between film studios) and the centrality of VGIK (the All-Union State Institute of Cinematography) in training film professionals, there was a persistent separation between the center and the periphery, in both cultural identity and censorship.<sup>1</sup>

While these trends speak to the predominant images of Central Asia in Soviet film emerging from the center, significant changes were taking place in the national film studios. The hegemonic tendencies of Soviet cultural forms underwent a transformation in the 1960s and 1970s when artistic creation came to be filtered at the national level rather than Moscow

---

<sup>1</sup> This separation can be understood through Moscow’s iconization of Central Asian cultural forms and traditions, despite particular realities and local variations. Moreover, the difficulties experienced by early directors (See Kamil’ Iarmatov, *Vozvrashchenie: Kniga vospominaniia* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1980), 243-45) to promote positive images of Central Asia reflects Moscow’s desire to control the culture of progress. Although in Iarmatov’s case, *Alisher Navoi* was made, there was criticism of historical films which failed to underline worker enthusiasm on the kol’kozy and in the factories. These images were particularly non-Central Asian and did not reach the steppe until 1950s and the Virgin Lands programs, albeit again with heavy Russian assistance for the seemingly hapless, or non-existent, local Central Asians.

## THIS IS A DRAFT – NOT INTENDED FOR CITATION

academies and political circles. As a result, the valuation of artistic “professionalization” no longer demanded European and Russian styles of cultural expression but diversified the approaches to creative success.

The focus of my argument advances a history of filmic images instead of a history from above/below or a history of film in the Soviet era. These images change and persist in ways that relate a great deal about the fate of nationalities in the Soviet system. Through this examination, I intend to correct the scholarly tendency to homogenize Soviet minorities and to focus on particular visual frameworks of Soviet performance that relate national identities. Part of this correction appreciates the agency of minority nationalities to negotiate their ethnic identity within Soviet film. Influenced by Soviet cultural concepts, nationality filmmakers increasingly sought their own historical lessons and played a key role establishing their own identity representation. Through a concept of *performing history*, I will consider the implications of transmitting historical lessons through film and the growing ability of nationalities to determine the messages contained within them.

Modernist historians and social scientists (Gellner, Hobsbawm, Anderson) see nationalism as a function of modernity that creates myths of nationhood based on a glorious ethnic past and a promising future of success. Throughout the twentieth century film played a key role in highlighting these national tendencies. As a form of media that could unify visual landscapes, musical styles, and native-language texts, film was particularly successful in creating a comprehensive sensory experience of the nation.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> See Anthony Smith on his concept of “cultivating an ethnic atmosphere” in his “Images of the Nation: Cinema, Art and National Identity,” in Mette Hjort and Scott Mackenzie, eds., *Cinema and Nation* (New York: Routledge, 2000): 45-60.

## THIS IS A DRAFT – NOT INTENDED FOR CITATION

Alongside this appreciation of ascendant global nationalism, is the scholarly tendency to homogenize the postcolonial experience.<sup>3</sup> Edward Said, in particular, understood “western” cinema through its construction of the “east” for purposes of the “west.” Film, for him, was a cultural imperial act of appropriation. Homi Bhabha offers a useful corrective by employing the concepts of “mimicry” and “hybridity” to explore the diverse applications of nationalism in the network of colonial and postcolonial discursive modes.<sup>4</sup> Bhabha argues in a rather complex fashion:

This supplementary space of cultural signification that opens up – and holds together – the performative and the pedagogical, provides a narrative structure characteristic of modern political rationality: the marginal integration of individuals in a repetitious movement between the antimonies of law and order. From the liminal movement of the culture of the nation – at once opened up and held together – minority discourse emerges.<sup>5</sup>

It is within this performative space, in our case Kazak opera and film, that cultural and national identities represented a valuable minority discourse. And, while I am aware of the mutability of filmic images (and the challenges of interpreting them), “illusions of cultural identity” should not be dismissed for their fluidity or lack of homogeneity, but rather understood for the political implications of these constructions.<sup>6</sup>

This paper specifically considers Sultan Khodzhikov’s filmic rendering of the classic love story, *The Silk Maiden* (1970), which revived a classic legend of star-crossed lovers caught in a time of tribal antagonisms and external threats. This story was particularly rich in cultural

---

<sup>3</sup> Where Central Asia fits into postcolonial studies remains to be seen since the Soviet Union was convincingly colonialist as well as anti-colonialist.

<sup>4</sup> Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004).

<sup>5</sup> Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004): 222, in his “DissemiNation” essay.

<sup>6</sup> Jean-Francois Bayart, *The Illusion of Cultural Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

## THIS IS A DRAFT – NOT INTENDED FOR CITATION

resonance for a Kazak audience familiar with its centrality in the Kazak epic tradition and of its place as the first Soviet Kazak opera in the 1930s. While the film did not garner the same critical success as contemporary films by Shaken Aimanov, Tolomush Okeev, and Ali Khamraev, *The Silk Maiden* became the most politically significant Kazak film of the 1970s and has remained a popular favorite of the era. Like the opera the film enjoyed remarkable political and public support, but the radically divergent expressions of musical and aesthetic performance reveal much about the changed political climate in the Soviet Union and about the ability of ethnic minorities to revisit their national histories for their own purposes.

**Evgenii Brusilovskii, Text, and Opera**

In 1933, Evgenii Brusilovskii arrived in Kazakstan to undertake research and to teach at the Kazak Music and Drama College.<sup>7</sup> He quickly realized that Kazakstan was embarking on a major cultural transformation that he would play a crucial role in it. Rena Moisenko described this aspect of the Soviet musical project with some skepticism: “For the first few constructive years, Russian Soviet composers, scientists and technicians stood in ‘*loco parentis*’ to the musicians of non-European Union Republics.”<sup>8</sup> Andrey Olkhovsky described the development of national arts: “As a rule experienced composers are periodically sent out to these areas on missions from Moscow; they collect ethnographic material and then, back in Moscow, write a ‘national opera’ for yet another musical festival in Moscow.”<sup>9</sup> In his view, music corresponded to party dogma rather than celebrated the artistic innovation of a pre-existing cultural tradition.

---

<sup>7</sup> The only biographical study of Brusilovskii is available in Anatolii Kel’berg, *E. G. Brusilovskii* (Moscow: Sovetskii kompositor, 1959).

<sup>8</sup> R. Moisenko (1943): 33.

<sup>9</sup> Andrey Olkhovsky (1955): 265.

## THIS IS A DRAFT – NOT INTENDED FOR CITATION

A closer examination of Brusilovskii reveals that both were present. Theodore Levin describes the same situation: “At the same time that such ‘Party work’ was spearheaded by local cadres, Russians dispatched by Moscow served as gray eminences, overseeing, exhorting, teaching, and setting an example for their local Party brethren.”<sup>10</sup> The motivation of the composers was fueled by their own “ethnographic interest in Russia’s vast range of ‘Oriental’ cultures, ideological conviction, fear, or a mixture of these.”<sup>11</sup>

The first official All-Kazak gathering of artists and musicians took place in June 1934 in Alma-Ata.<sup>12</sup> There, Temirbek Zhurgenev, the Kazak Commissar of Education, asked Brusilovskii how he was adjusting to work in Kazakstan and whether he chose to work there. Brusilovskii answered: “Yes, indeed. I wanted to work in a national republic. And I chose yours specifically because I was familiar with the collection of Zataevich, ‘One Thousand Kazak Songs.’ And [through this work] Kazak folk music entered my soul.”<sup>13</sup> Following a brief interview, Zhurgenev requested that Brusilovskii demonstrate several piano interpretations of Kurmangazı’s küi. Zhurgenev was so impressed with Brusilovskii’s work that he asked: “Would it be possible for you write an opera for us based on Kazak folk music?” When Brusilovskii replied that it was indeed possible, Zhurgenev immediately suggested the story of “Kız Zhibek” as the theme.<sup>14</sup> In thirty days Brusilovskii wrote the music for the opera that would become a centerpiece of the Kazak national repertoire.

The Kazak legend *Kız Zhibek*, or *The Silk Maiden*, an epic dating from the eighteenth century, re-emerged as an innovative form of musical performance completely foreign to the

---

<sup>10</sup> Theodore Levin, “Making Marxist-Leninist Music in Uzbekistan,” in Regula Burckhardt Qureshi, *Music and Marx: Ideas, Practice, Politics* (London: Routledge, 2002): 192.

<sup>11</sup> Theodore Levin, “Making Marxist-Leninist Music in Uzbekistan,” in Regula Burckhardt Qureshi, *Music and Marx: Ideas, Practice, Politics* (London: Routledge, 2002): 192.

<sup>12</sup> TsGARK 81/3/604/9-24, details the participants and their performances during the meeting.

<sup>13</sup> Kanabek Baiseitov, *Na vsiu zhizn’: avtobiograficheskaiia povest’* (Alma-Ata: Zhazushy, 1981): 129.

<sup>14</sup> Kanabek Baiseitov, *Na vsiu zhizn’: avtobiograficheskaiia povest’* (Alma-Ata: Zhazushy, 1981): 130.

## THIS IS A DRAFT – NOT INTENDED FOR CITATION

Kazak musical tradition. Re-writing the story as a European-style opera, Brusilovskii spent two weeks assembling the musical score from existing Kazak songs in Zataevich's collection and supplementing them with his own compositions. The melodies for the opera were drawn from the songs of Amre Kashaubaev (*Kos baraban, Akkum, Kok kobelek, Zhiirma bes*), Isa Baizakov (*Gakku*), Garifolla (*Song of bii Aiaz, Dunie-ai, Kara kanshyk*), Kurmanbek Zhandarbekov (*Kok zhendet, Sari moiin, Sokirbie, Alkarakok*), and Kanabek Baiseitov (*Song of the Mother of Batyr Orak*).<sup>15</sup> Essentially, the leitmotif of this lyrical drama is constructed around two songs: “*Gakku*,” for the youth and grace of Zhibek, and “*Akkum*,” for the arrogance and strength of Bekezhan.<sup>16</sup>

The narrative was replicated through the folk song of “*Gakku*,” which related a customary love parable. The direct incorporation of these works reflected a strong motive to maintain a traditional musical form. At the same time, the careful arrangement of the instrumental pieces into the operatic form demonstrated a commitment to reinterpreting traditional folk music. This opera did not necessarily provide a cultural symbol through which to unite the Kazak populace; instead it represented an effort by the Union of Composers to ensure that Soviet nationality culture evolved along commonly accepted lines. These functions were not necessarily inimical since center and periphery could still be appeased by striking the appropriate balance between “national in form, socialist in content.”

*The Silk Maiden* was first performed at the Kazak Music and Drama Theatre on 7 November 1934 and gained recognition as the first Kazak opera. Gabit Musrepov (1902-1985) wrote the libretto based on his play of the same title. In the 1920s, Saken Seifullin had begun to

---

<sup>15</sup> See excerpts from his musical scores of his first two operas in E. Brusilovskii, *Qazaqt'n, "Zhalb'r" zhane "Q'z-Zhibek," att' muzikali piieselerinen al'oan: ariia, qor zhane biiler* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe muzykal'noe izdatel'stvo, 1936).

<sup>16</sup> The opera also includes the familiar traditional Kazak instrumental works: *Tolkima*, , *Algaraikok*, *Aksak kulan*, *Ulken oraz*, *Raushan*, *Madi*, Abai Kunanbaev's *Kor boldi*, *janim*, and Mukhit Meraliev's *Dunie-ai*.

## THIS IS A DRAFT – NOT INTENDED FOR CITATION

teach the legend in his course on Kazak literature.<sup>17</sup> He ultimately published a variation in 1936 that was based on Zhusupbek Sheikhulislamov's account from 1900 in Kazan.<sup>18</sup> In fact, there were eleven written accounts of the legend recorded in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.<sup>19</sup> These examples were collected and translated into Russian until the 1920s, but had not been studied in the Kazak Republic. During the 1920s, rather, Kazak Bolsheviks banned the performance of legends, such as *The Silk Maiden*, as part of their rejection of folk tradition and culture.<sup>20</sup> For them, culture was designed to impart knowledge and a greater awareness of socialist ideology and the value of technological progress. Nevertheless, the significance of Kazak legends survived this political pressure to provide the early basis for theatrical and operatic performances later in the 1930s.

The predominance of the legend *The Silk Maiden* in the genre of Kazak legends is not entirely surprising. The protagonist, Zhibek, presented an ideal female character: devoted, powerful, and sentimental. Her idealization as a heroine was common in Kazak epics, as well as in all Turkic epics.<sup>21</sup> And, for political purposes, this ideal would serve as a contemporary example of proper behavior under the early Soviet regime in Central Asia. The opera tells the story of a Kazak bride and the triumph of traditional love over tyranny.<sup>22</sup> The legend also reveals much about the diversity of the Kazak people and efforts to maintain their cohesiveness despite heterogeneity.

---

<sup>17</sup> N. S. Smirnova, "O versiiakh 'Kyz Zhibek,'" in M. Auezov and N. Smirnova, eds., *Kyz Zhibek* (Alma-Ata: Izdatel'stvo akademii nauk Kazakhskoi SSR, 1963): 278.

<sup>18</sup> *Kyz-Zhibek: narodnaia kazakhskaia poema* (Alma-Ata/Moscow: Kazakhstanskaia kraevoe izdatel'stvo, 1936).

<sup>19</sup> Boris Erzakovich, *Muzykal'noe nasledie kazakhskogo naroda* (Alma-Ata: 1979): 14 for the precise classification of each version. Another prominent rendering was recited by Musabai-zhirau for Russian scholars in Kazan in 1887.

<sup>20</sup> Temirbek Zhurgenev, "Boevye voprosy kul'tstroitel'stva v Kazakhstane," *Prosveshchenie natsional'nostei* 1 (1934): 19.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Winner (1958): 75.

<sup>22</sup> A basic description can be found in A. Zhubanov (ed.), *Ocherki po istorii kazakhskoi sovetskoi muzyki* (1962): 37. For more detailed analyses, see L. Sobolev (ed.), *Pesni stepei: Antologiiia kazakhskoi literatury* (Moscow: 1940): 92–107; M. Auezov, *Mysli raznykh let* (1961): 301–317; N. S. Smirnova, "O versiiakh 'Kyz Zhibek,'" in M. Auezov and N. Smirnova, eds., *Kyz Zhibek* (Alma-Ata: Izdatel'stvo akademii nauk Kazakhskoi SSR, 1963): 249–281.

## THIS IS A DRAFT – NOT INTENDED FOR CITATION

The legendary narrative begins with the hero, Tulegen, searching for true love rather than accepting his parents' arranged marriage. Tulegen travels across the steppe to find Zhibek and obtains her consent to marry him. Tulegen then returns home to gain approval from his parents and prepare for the wedding, but his father refuses to allow it. Tulegen disregards his parents' wishes and sets out alone to meet his bride. Tragedy befalls the hero along the way when he meets Bekezhan, a rival suitor and a Kalmyk, who kills him. Rejecting Bekezhan, Kız Zhibek transfers her love to Tulegen's younger brother, Sansızbai, and the story ends with their marriage.

Not surprisingly, Soviet scholars have emphasized the theme of class struggle apparent in the text. For them, Bekezhan symbolizes the wealthy and oppressive feudal lord who aims to exploit the masses and subjugate the Kazak people. Zhibek rejects his brutish love for the true love of Tulegen (and its extension through Sansızbai) that reached across clan lines and familial obligations to unite the Kazak people. This reading, however, fails to address the importance of religion and nationality in the text.

The opera concludes with the tradition of *amengerstvo*, a pre-revolutionary Kazak law stating that the widow must marry one of the husband's male relatives a year after the husband's death. The Kazak audience was familiar with the themes of the popular story of this opera and recognized its emotions and characters. Rather than privileging the role of tradition, the Soviet staging of *The Silk Maiden* emphasized the heroine's loyalty to the memory of Tulegen, first, and her respect for tradition, second. In Mukhtar Auezov's estimation: "[*The Silk Maiden*] appears as an epic form of folklore where the customs and moral principles of the ancient life of Kazak nomads are clearly represented."<sup>23</sup> This idea was not entirely popular with Bolshevik ideologues

---

<sup>23</sup> M. Auezov, *Mysli raznykh let* (1961): 437.

## THIS IS A DRAFT – NOT INTENDED FOR CITATION

in Kazakstan who began to view legends with suspicion increasingly during the 1920s.<sup>24</sup> In this legend, national consciousness and Islam combine in a form of othering clear in the text.

Beyond the trappings of the epic love story, a political intrigue emerges between Kazaks and Kalmyks.<sup>25</sup> When faced with the death of Tulegen, Zhibek asks:

I took a risk with God,	<i>Tauekel qyldym allagha,</i>
Is it possible to become the wife,	<i>Qaitip qatyn bolarmyn,</i>
Of an enemy of my God,	<i>Qudaiymnyng dushpany,</i>
Of a descendant of a Kalmyk?	<i>Nasili zhaman kalmaqqa?</i> <sup>26</sup>

Zhibek would rather face death than marry a Kalmyk, who represents the conquerors and oppressors of the Kazaks. Later in the story, when the hero's younger brother, Sansızbai, meets another Kalmyk, Koren, he confronts him:

If you are a Muslim, to you I	<i>Musylman bolsang saghan men</i>
Would be a friend.	<i>Bolaiyn zholdas dep edim.</i>
If you belong to a lineage of infidels,	<i>Nasiling kapir zhau bolsang,</i>
If Allah restores the leash,	<i>Alla tizginingdi ongdasa,</i>
To your place in hell	<i>Zhahannamdegi ornynga</i>
Let it be!	<i>Zhibereiin dep edim.</i> <sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> Thomas Winner (1958).

<sup>25</sup> Over the course of the seventeenth century, the Kalmyks conquered large sections of the Kazak steppe and controlled the key trade routes. In the early eighteenth century, despite several Kazak efforts to repel them, the Kalmyks continued their expansion and exacted particularly heavy casualties. From 1723 to 1726, the “Great Calamity” (*Aqtaban shubirindi*) sent Kazaks retreating from their territories: the Ulu Zhuz migrated south into Bukhara and Khiva, while the Kishi and Orta Zhuz traveled into Russian territories to their north and west. In Kazak history, this watershed moment played an important role as a cultural unifier for Kazaks divided among distinct tribal confederations.

<sup>26</sup> *Qyz Zhibek khikaiasy* (Kazan, 1900): lines 2312-2315; published in M. Auezov and N. Smirnova, eds., *Kyz Zhibek* (1963): 113.

<sup>27</sup> *Qyz Zhibek khikaiasy* (Kazan, 1900): lines 2543-2548; published in M. Auezov and N. Smirnova, eds., *Kyz Zhibek* (1963): 119.

## THIS IS A DRAFT – NOT INTENDED FOR CITATION

By restoring Islam and overcoming the Kalmyks in the end of the story, Sansızbai could marry Zhibek and bring happiness to the Kazaks again. At the conclusion of the opera, the new hero arrives at Zhibek's aul, *Zhaike*, literally meaning "to a place." Zhibek's village represents a sense of belonging to the land that Kalmyks attempted to conquer. Here, we see the intersection of folklore and nationality: Kazaks had their own historical identity and through heroism they conquered their enemy.

The introductory title of a 1936 documentary film showing the opera read: "The Kazakh people themselves are the authors and composers of this drama. It was compiled from material gathered in obscure mountain villages by minstrels whose names have long since been forgotten."<sup>28</sup> Claiming universal and anonymous provenance, the authors of this text revealed a paradox that celebrated the particularity of the legend's long history as well as its mass popularity. In a literal sense, it was also an opera written by a Russian composer based on musical transcriptions made by a Russian musical-ethnographer with the aid of several important Kazak musicians in the 1920s and 1930s.

### **Periphery Ethnophilia after Stalin**

The concept of "ethnophilia" popularized by Yuri Slezkine contributes to a deeper understanding of nationality policy in the 1920s. Later, in the 1960s and 1970s, we witness a similar trend co-opted by national minorities themselves. From an artistic point of view, there was an ethnographic retreat between these eras. Peter Kenez argues that Stalin was more interested in oppositions, black and white clarity, and precise story lines and types of

---

<sup>28</sup> *Shelkovaia devushka (The Silk Maiden)* (Alma-Atinskaia studia kinokhronika, 1936). Central State Archives of Cinematographic, Photographic, and Audio Documents and Sound Recordings of Kazakhstan (TsGAKFADZK), no. 1447.

## THIS IS A DRAFT – NOT INTENDED FOR CITATION

characters.<sup>29</sup> Along with the shift to icons and to recurring narratives, Stalin asserted that film was “the greatest means of mass agitation.”<sup>30</sup> For him, the unity of Soviet nationalities should not only be instructive for audiences but a call to action.

Michael Smith exposes a conflict in socialist realism as socialist forms were combined with national forms of “everyday life” (*byt*).<sup>31</sup> As “backward forces” were associated with the Soviet east, national realism became the grounds for the struggle against the past. Smith argues that rather than a reflection of “local realities, national realism tended more to project condescending ethnic prejudices onto the screen. In aesthetic terms, it meant deconstructing the national borderlands into a body of typical scenes, settings, and characters.” The consequence of this policy resulted in a “strange circular logic” of national cinema where “the underdeveloped peoples of the east needed film in order to help propel them into the future; yet film recapitulated the very images of backwardness that it was designed to overcome.”<sup>32</sup>

The few studies on Central Asian film tend to be descriptive rather than analytical, owing to paucity of the existing literature. In one such example, Lino Micciché essentially follows Marxist-Leninist production models and chooses to relay the relative statistics of filmmaking rather than to describe artistic and cinematographic characteristics. He indicates that the “[cinema of Transcaucasia and Central Asia] represents about a quarter of the overall annual film production, a third of the overall audience, and a fifth of the screening units.”<sup>33</sup> Certainly, this is an important point that underlines the need for more scholarship and probing beyond Moscow.

---

<sup>29</sup> *Cinema & Soviet Society, 1917-1953*, 250.

<sup>30</sup> See Richard Taylor, *The Politics of the Soviet Cinema, 1917-1929* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1979): 64, and Jay Leyda, *Kino: A History of the Russian and Soviet Film*, 158 for more information on Stalin’s speech at the Thirteenth Party Congress of the Russian Communist Party in 1924.

<sup>31</sup> Smith uses the term, “national realism,” to describe the application of national forms of *byt*.

<sup>32</sup> Michael Smith, “Cinema for the ‘Soviet East’: National Fact and Revolutionary Fiction in Early Azerbaijani Film,” *Slavic Review* (Winter 1997): 671.

<sup>33</sup> Lino Micciché, “The Cinema of the Transcaucasian and Central Asian Republics,” 295, in Anna Lawton, ed. *The Red Screen* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

## THIS IS A DRAFT – NOT INTENDED FOR CITATION

Moreover, Micciché criticizes the tendency of Moscow “to present an absolutely undifferentiated image of the cinema in the eight republics, as if each of them had achieved exactly the same level of development.”<sup>34</sup> Although I believe a more convincing set of sources would be more useful, this argument highlights the bureaucratic tendency to group non-Russians rather than to see their individual nature and developments. Despite clear differences in the historical and cultural traditions of Central Asian republics, scholarship tends to make basic assumptions about the “east” as a uniform group.<sup>35</sup> Further study is needed to elucidate the particular contrasts of the Central Asian film studios and the efforts made to reclaim their own histories through film.

Lino Micciché asserts that “films from the periphery are expected to perform a supporting rôle, going from the local variant of great general issues to the persuasive channeling of national consciousness into the larger political, ideological, multinational stream leading to Moscow.”<sup>36</sup> This is a conventional interpretation of Russian chauvinism; yet it remains to be seen if and when this model breaks down. Despite efforts by the center to interpret the “achievements of the Soviet multinational film art” (a phrase often used by Moscow to describe artistic and international acclaim for Central Asian film in the 1960s and 1970s) as part of a dynamic system that depended on Moscow, the images depicted in these films indicate that Moscow had, in fact, lost its artistic control of the periphery. Thus the common assumption that “the national perspective, and even the ethnic and anthropological background of the characters,

---

<sup>34</sup> Lino Micciché, 297.

<sup>35</sup> There is a long tradition in Russia, reaching back culturally into the early nineteenth century that employs the concept, “vostok”, to associate not only Muslim Central Asia, but also India and China. Milan Hauner’s *What is Asia to Us? Russia’s Asian heartland yesterday and today* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990), offers a detailed overview of Russian views and policies towards the east.

One example that bridges Western and Soviet scholarship is Val Golovskoy’s description of the “Fifteen Soviet Republics,” in *Behind the Soviet Screen: The Motion Picture Industry in the USSR, 1972-1982* (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1986). He remarks that Russians, Ukrainians, and Belorussians are the most important and that there are “several republics located in Central Asia” (Golovskoy 43). And even when Golovskoy describes the Kyrgyz Goskino, it is only to mention that it is the smallest and even poorly located in Frunze, the capital of the republic (Golovskoy 44). The persistence of these negative images of Central Asia as a common cultural unit (of the Soviet Muslim “east”) had a lasting effect.

<sup>36</sup> Lino Micciché, 300.

## THIS IS A DRAFT – NOT INTENDED FOR CITATION

is thus often employed only as exotic scenarios and ‘costumes’ for staging problems that are basically rooted in Moscow,<sup>37</sup> may effectively describe the aims of the regime under Stalin but it fails to hold weight as we move into the Brezhnev era.

A key moment in the challenge to filmic socialist realism took place during the Second Plenum of the Committee of Cinematographers in 1959.<sup>38</sup> At that conference particular attention was devoted to the arguments on the place of nationality in film. Semen Dolidze argued that “in a socialist society, all the people have a community of ideas, thoughts, and forms of expression of these different ways of thinking. National form – this is by no means at all ethnographic material (costumes, dances, native music, and customs, etc.). The artist should notice and convey the national particularities [*osobennosty*] of human character.”<sup>39</sup> Latif Safarov even criticized national film studios and their directors for not revealing enough of the “national coloring and national traits” of the people.<sup>40</sup> New interpretations of “national in form, socialist in content” arose within the “brotherhood of nations.” This trend began in literature but it quickly spread to film. In fact, literature and theater served as the base for early Kazak cinema in the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>41</sup> Mikhail Kapustin identified Larisa Shepitko’s *Heat (Znoi, 1963)* as the first film in Central Asia with “national character.” While there were certainly earlier examples that had not benefited from the wide distribution of Shepitko’s film, it is important that there was an awareness of the film’s connection to literature.<sup>42</sup> In this case, it was based on the literary

---

<sup>37</sup> Lino Micciché, 300.

<sup>38</sup> The main points of the conference were disseminated in “Vsiu silu kinoiskusstva— delu stroitel’stva kommunizma,” *Iskusstvo kino*, no. 3, 1959, 21-29.

<sup>39</sup> “Vsiu silu kinoiskusstva— delu stroitel’stva kommunizma,” *Iskusstvo kino*, 3 (1959): 26.

<sup>40</sup> “Vsiu silu kinoiskusstva— delu stroitel’stva kommunizma,” *Iskusstvo kino*, 3 (1959): 26.

<sup>41</sup> K. Ainagulova and K. Alimbaeva, *Tendentsii razvitiia kinoiskusstva Kazakhstana* (Almaty: Ghylym, 1990): 7-9.

<sup>42</sup> Earlier examples would be Shaken Aimanov’s *A Poem about Love* (1954) and several films by Latif Faiziev and Kamal Iarmatov.

## THIS IS A DRAFT – NOT INTENDED FOR CITATION

forms of Chinghiz Aitmatov's *Verbliuzhii glaz*.<sup>43</sup> These national forms, in Kapustin's estimation, represented a progressive challenge to Moscow's dogmatism, as Central Asian cinema advances new ideas to old genres.<sup>44</sup>

The unity of socialist peoples had long been a topic depicted in Soviet cinema; by 1970, however, the messages were subtler and there was greater space for national narratives. Scenes of minority masses screaming their support for Stalin (as in *Kliatva*) could no longer pose as "brotherhood of nations." In the pages of *Iskusstvo kino*, in particular, frequent essays were written by Central Asian actors and directors in the 1970s to support the international mission of socialism and the unity of socialist peoples. Kamal Iarmatov's "Il'ich Unified Us" and Tolomush Okeev's "His Light Is in Our Hearts" celebrated Lenin's symbolic role in the author's lives and in the history of Central Asia. The writer Chinghiz Aitmatov's "Our International Duty" and the actor and director Alty Karliev's "We Are All Together" welcomed the socialist world to the African and Asian Film Festival in Tashkent (which was held there every two years). Yet, despite this public support for internationalism and collective Soviet identity, film publications unconsciously advocated diversity. One Bulgarian author wrote in 1976 that Kyrgyz films offer a "blend between documentary realism and metaphor, between concrete, clearly etched detail and a fairy tale atmosphere. Thus emerged a film aesthetic that continues documentary technique with the poetry of Kirghiz natural beauty and folklore."<sup>45</sup> There was a consistent tendency to associate Central Asian films of the 1970s with folk images. An article commending the talent of a famous actress from Turkmenistan, Maya Aimedova, is entitled "Her

---

<sup>43</sup> M. P. Kapustin, *Dialektika natsional'nogo i obshchechelovecheskogo v khudozhestvennoi kul'ture sovetskogo vostoka* (Tashkent: Fan, 1978), 100.

<sup>44</sup> See Kapustin, 103-107.

<sup>45</sup> Georgi Stoyanov-Biga, "Bulgarian Critic's View of Kirghiz Films," *Soviet Film*, 5 (1976): 43. He adds that "their films possess poetry, wisdom, high drama, lyricism and epic breadth... Kirghiz films are a real revelation. They continue the literary tradition of Chinghiz Aitmatov and the folk epic tradition harking back to the 'Manas' epic."

## THIS IS A DRAFT – NOT INTENDED FOR CITATION

Acting is Like a Song.” One only has to look to the first sentence of the article to understand its assumptions about the collective identity of the Soviet people. It reads, “A journalist once described Maya Aimedova as a quintessential modern actress, although her appearance would seem to belie that statement.”<sup>46</sup>

In the 1960s and 1970s, however, there was a shift to meet new party attitudes towards nationalities. Cinema quickly followed Brezhnev’s line on the interdependence of nationalities: “Any of the Soviet national cultures flows not only from one’s own people, but also draws from the richness of other peoples.”<sup>47</sup> Seiit Bokonbaev’s *We Began with Nothing*... was an effort to show the interconnectedness and mutual-dependence of Soviet and Kyrgyz cinema.<sup>48</sup> Following the most recent calls of the Fourth Plenum of Soviet Cinematographers (in 1981), Bokonbaev asserted that there were two stages in the development of Kyrgyz film: first, direct support from the “brother” republics and, then, increasing development of tradition and professionalism while maintaining interconnections of personal and training at VGIK. This cinematic connection would last until the end of the Soviet Union despite increasing national sentiment that undermined political linkages. Neyā Zorkaya highlights this point, arguing that despite their particular ethnic identities Central Asian films continued to reflect the “Soviet school of cinematography” by combining the “national and international,” the “individual and ethnic.”<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> Andrei Plakhov, “Her Acting is Like a Song,” *Soviet Film*, 11 (1978): 35. Another interesting passage from the same page reads: “She is remarkably at home in the setting offered her by the director: the desert, the nomadic tents and flocks of sheep.”

<sup>47</sup> L. I. Brezhnev, *O piatidesiatiletii Soiuzā Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh respublikakh* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1973), 21. Quoted from Seiit Bokonbaev, *My nachinali ne s nulia... Kirgizskoe kino v sem’e mnogonatsional’noe* (Frunze: Kyrgyzstan, 1982): 7. See also *O piatidesiatiletii Soiuzā Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh respublikakh*, 15, for references to Central Asia.

<sup>48</sup> Seiit Bokonbaev, *My nachinali ne s nulia... Kirgizskoe kino v sem’e mnogonatsional’noe*. The title of the work is derived from a comment in Tolomush Okeev’s “Ego svet v nashikh serdtsakh,” *Iskusstvo kino*, 1 (1974): 19.

<sup>49</sup> See Neyā Zorkaya, *The Illustrated History of the Soviet Cinema* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1989): 291.

## THIS IS A DRAFT – NOT INTENDED FOR CITATION

While non-Russian directors and screenwriters continued to graduate from VGIK, these directors chose remarkably different paths to express their identities. Neya Zorkaya again indicates that “in the seventies *Oriental* filmmakers, both emergent and experienced, undertook to translate ancient folk tradition on the screen, doing it naturally and inspiredly.”<sup>50</sup> It is in this context and with the specific case of Kazakstan that I will direct the remainder of the paper.

### **The Silk Maiden on Film**

The official Soviet narrative on Kazak film in the 1960s stated that “truly national cinematography arises with the merging of national distinctiveness and of national vision with a universal worldview. Only by seizing a world cinema culture and uniting it with a concrete national substance and with an individual artistic conception is it possible to achieve serious creative results.”<sup>51</sup> It is within this framework that we should evaluate the depth of national substance and its relationship with world and Soviet cinema culture. As discussed earlier, literature played a key role in giving voice to national narrative. Theater played an even more direct link by connecting performance to the existing narratives of nations.

From its origins in the late-1910s and mass spectacles from the early-1930s onward, theatrical and musical performances relating the stories of the Kazak nation have been invested with particularly rich significance.<sup>52</sup> As popular cultural forms shifted from opera to film there

---

<sup>50</sup> Neya Zorkaya, *The Illustrated History of the Soviet Cinema* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1989): 295. The italics is mine.

<sup>51</sup> Raushan Ospanova, “Kazakhskoe kinoiskusstvo 60-x godov” in *Ocherki istorii kazakhskogo kino* (Alma-Ata: Nauka, 1980): 171-2.

<sup>52</sup> See Michael Rouland, “Creating a Cultural Nation: Alexander Zataevich in Kazakstan” in *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 3 (2005): 533-553 and “A Nation on Stage: Music in the 1936 Festival of Kazak Arts” in Neil Edmund’s *The Baton and the Sickle: Soviet Music and Society under Lenin and Stalin* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004): 181-208. The most comprehensive study on this topic is available in “Music and the Making of the Kazak Nation, 1920-1936” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Georgetown University, 2005).

## THIS IS A DRAFT – NOT INTENDED FOR CITATION

was little initial change in the narrative composition or actors themselves. Early Kazak filmmakers and actors often began their professional careers in the opera and in musical theaters. In the case of *The Silk Maiden*, many actors from drawn directly from the Theater Department of the Alma-Ata Institute of the Arts. The intertwining of theater, opera, and film is particularly evident in the work of Gabit Musrepov. A popular playwright and librettist, Musrepov wrote the screenplay for the first Kazak film, *Amangel'dy* (1939), which celebrated a Kazak socialist hero in the civil war. He later wrote the screenplays for *A Poem about Love* (1954) and *The Silk Maiden* (1970) based on popular Kazak legends.

The directorial pioneer of Kazak cinema, Shaken Aimanov (1914-1970), also began his career in the theater.<sup>53</sup> His first feature film, *A Poem about Love*, was based on the *Kozy-Korpesh and Baian-Slu* epic. While he his fame arose from his later films (*We Live Here* (1956), *Land of Our Fathers* (1966), and *End of the Ataman* (1970)), this film was essentially a documentary filming of the academic theater's performance. While I tend to be skeptical of the Soviet romance with the idea of the arrival of artistic "professionalism" that brings in each new era, Kazak film was developing in the 1950s and 1960s. When Sultan Khodzhikov's *The Silk Maiden* revisited the epic and opera in 1970, a level of new technical sophistication made a much richer epic drama possible. An examination of the storyline, the visual landscape, and the music reveals a more comprehensive filmic performance of the nation that marked the 1970s as arguably its most politically significant film for Kazaks.

Gabit Musrepov retained his writing credit from the original operatic libretto in the film, but the plot was drastically changed in the film version. The film begins later and ends earlier in the action than the opera and text variations of the legend. Specifically, the film begins with the arrival of Tulegen to Zhibek's camp. Tulegen's motivation in the film is more clearly expressed

---

<sup>53</sup> L. Bogatenkova, *Narodnyi artist SSSR, Shaken Aimanov* (Almaty: Nauka, 1973): 13.

## THIS IS A DRAFT – NOT INTENDED FOR CITATION

to seek a tribal alliance rather than to join romantic and political ambitions in the seduction of Zhibek. Their love, of course, is the source of confrontation in the story since Zhibek already has a suitor in the character of Bekezhan.

By tracing the changing thematic images of the villain, Bekezhan, in the various manifestations of this story, the temporal concerns of the narrators are laid bare. In the oral legend Bekezhan is a Kalmyk, in the opera he is a class enemy, and in the film he is a Kazak *batyr* standing in the way of a Kazak tribal alliance. These threats represent the concerns of their particular eras to vilify the foreign Kalmyks, the feudal elite, and unpatriotic Kazaks, respectively. For the audience of the 1970s, Amangel'dy Kairbaev argued, "in *The Silk Maiden* it is possible to trace the intent to scrutinize the individual with respect to the unbreakable union."<sup>54</sup> The inevitable positive forces such as Tulegen sought to unify Kazaks despite the efforts of Bekezhan to undermine him. In the film, Tulegen's vision outlives him and the three *zhuz* (hordes) come together ultimately to punish Bekezhan.

The film concludes with Karshiga, Zhibek's mother, extinguishing the celebratory candles. Zhibek's marriage to Tulegen is thwarted. As Zhibek stands in the center of her yurt, the last candlelight fades into smoke, representing Zhibek's life. We then see Zhibek's *saukele* floating in the sea, the traditional hat of a fiancée, discarded. Perhaps she has drown, this is left ambiguously. This scene is not in the operatic rendition because the opera engages the story until Zhibek's marriage to Tulegen's brother. By ending the film with the deaths of Tulegen and of Zhibek, the importance of the unification of the Kazak tribes in their collective need to cast off the Kalmyk threat is strongly emphasized. The Russian role is conveniently ignored, although Soviet era historians often indicated that the Kazak-Russian alliance finally rid the Kazak of the

---

<sup>54</sup> A. Kairbaev, *Vstrechi na ekrane: rasskazy o kazakhskom kino* (Alma-Ata: Zhalyyn, 1979): 36.

## THIS IS A DRAFT – NOT INTENDED FOR CITATION

Kalmyk threat. A more current view on this history emphasizes the rise of Qing power in the region that ultimately undermines the Kalmyk ability to expand across the Tian Shan Mountains.

While these narrative choices reflected a shifting of the legend away from the early Soviet imposition of the class struggle, the Kazak audience expected to see a cinematic translation of the popular opera. They expected to hear the familiar songs and storyline. And for the most part, their expectations were met. Perhaps the most radical transformation in *The Silk Maiden* was the visual landscape and filmic palette rendered by Khodzhikov and his cohort.

A radically new visual performance of the legend met the viewers from the first scene. In quick succession: blood stains on the steppe, swans screeching, a horse struggling in pain, a village destroyed, mothers and orphaned lined on a ridge, a caravan passing, and an abandoned *shangarak* (the wooden circle at the smoke opening that holds the yurt together and the symbol of the Kazak hearth and home). It is the last image that is most haunting for viewers – the destruction of the most vibrant symbol of Kazak unity (and the image on Kazakhstan's flag today). Here, Kairbaev notes that the film “reflected various sides of the nomadic life of Kazaks, for example, aspiring for unity in the face of incomplete wars and tribal prejudices.”<sup>55</sup>

Throughout the film, images reference traditional Kazak culture. So much in fact that the film was seemingly not designed for non-Kazak audiences. There is an effort here to preserve rituals on film before they are lost. This should not surprise us, since the early-1970s begins to see the final rupture between pre-Soviet and Soviet generations. As these familial contacts are lost, this is an effort to preserve Kazak traditions before they are lost forever. There is also a strong visual sense of Kazakhstan in the film where landscape plays a central role. Like the films of Tolomush Okeev, Khodzhikov was clearly interested in giving the terrain a role in the film.

---

<sup>55</sup> A. Kairbaev, *Vstrechi na ekrane: rasskazy o kazakhskom kino* (Alma-Ata: Zhalyyn, 1979): 36.

## THIS IS A DRAFT – NOT INTENDED FOR CITATION

Despite these ethnographic tendencies, there was an effort to retain a visual quality of the opera as well. Gulfarius Ismailova, the art director for *The Silk Maiden*, was at that time the artistic director for the Kazak State Theater for Opera and Ballet in Alma-Ata. Ismailova studied in Leningrad at the Repin Institute and demonstrated a particular interest in Kazak dance and music in her painting. The linkage in her art and her mediation between art, opera, and film are particularly interesting in two of her major paintings. The first is a portrait of Kuliash Baiseitova, while she is performing the role of Zhibek as the first star of Brusilovskii's opera. The second is a work entitled, "Kazak Waltz," that depicts Sholpan Zhandarbekova performing Aktokty in Gabit Musrepov's minor opera, *Akhan-seri Aktokty*. Zhandarbekova was also the star of Aimanov's *Poem about Love*. Staging the centrality of the yurt was remarkably consistent in both the opera and the film – and the largely theatrical background of the film crew helps explain this commonality.

The central transformation in the film concerned the music. In other places, I have argued for the importance in music as a means of communicating national ideas and as a method of upholding Soviet musical sensibilities in the 1930s.<sup>56</sup> This is especially the case in the opera. In the film, however, this process was effectively reversed and Kazak musical sensibilities were reinserted into the legendary narrative. While Brusilovskii's opera had a tendency to be static in its musical arrangement, the film highlighted the improvisational character of the Kazak oral tradition.

---

<sup>56</sup> Michael Rouland, "Creating a Cultural Nation: Alexander Zataevich in Kazakstan" in *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 3 (2005): 533-553 and "A Nation on Stage: Music in the 1936 Festival of Kazak Arts" in Neil Edmund's *The Baton and the Sickle: Soviet Music and Society under Lenin and Stalin* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004): 181-208. The most comprehensive study on this topic is available in "Music and the Making of the Kazak Nation, 1920-1936" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Georgetown University, 2005).

## THIS IS A DRAFT – NOT INTENDED FOR CITATION

Nurgisa Tlendiev (1925-1998), the musical director of the film, had long served in the musical life of Alma-Ata developed by Evgenii Brusilovskii and Akmet Zhubanov in the 1930s and 1940s. Tlendiev was director of the Kurmangazı National Orchestra of Folk Instruments from 1960 to 1964.<sup>57</sup> He worked in film and wrote the music for *A Troubled Morning* (Abdullah Karsakbaev, 1966). He was a virtuoso dombrist and composer for the folk orchestra in his own right. As the musical director of *The Silk Maiden*, Tlendiev invested the soundtrack with deeper meanings, rather than dialogic accompaniment. This created a deeper emotional energy for the film in place of the musical simplicity of the original opera.

Listening to the film, the musical differences are striking. Although the Kurmangazı Orchestra accompanies, we hear individual musicians most frequently. The musicians K. Baibosynov, Zh. Zakirov, M. Uanbaeva, K. Baktaev offered a greater feel of the dombıra, kobız, and shan-kobız. Songs in the style of Birzhan-sal, instrumental works composed by Kurmangazı, or the rich philosophical terms proliferate. All of the Kazak classics are used: “Aksak kulan,” “Elim-ai,” “Saryarka,” “Serper,” “Adai,” alongside Gak-ku. There is also more musical diversity than the earlier operatic interpretation. From a narrative point of view, music was highlighted in the film through the development of the character of Shege, Tulegen’s companion and akın. Although Shege was a minor character in the epic, and largely overlooked in the opera, Shege plays a key role in the film as Tulegen’s advisor, *aksakal* (“white beard,” or elder), and storyteller. All these roles are deeply respected in traditional Kazak culture.

*The Silk Maiden* was considered a crucial film of its era and was resonant through the 1980s to the present day. Kairbaev has argued that it “did everything possible to make the heroes and story of distant centuries seem closer and comprehensible. It was appreciated and welcomed

---

<sup>57</sup> He founded the Otrar Sazy Orchestra in 1981 as the second major folk orchestra in Kazakhstan.

## THIS IS A DRAFT – NOT INTENDED FOR CITATION

into the hearts of today's viewers."<sup>58</sup> The film essentially highlights Kazak music with a native aesthetic and Kazak history independent of the Russian experience or Marxist understanding of historical materialism. This film moves artistic aesthetic beyond the tokenizing tendencies of socialist realist theater or musical dance tours to create complex images rooted in historical constructions of ethnographic reality and characters with depth.

In this fashion, the film offers a multifaceted performance of Kazak identity. Substituting traditional Soviet cultural messages with new, more complex, ones that evoke the centrality of Kazaks and communicate directly to Kazaks. Does the audience feel more engaged in the film than the opera? In the opera, the physical closeness to the actors, the musical richness of a live symphony, and the iconic symbols of a traditional epic read through a class conflict framework created a lasting appreciation of the confluence of Kazak images and of socialist ideas. This was the foundation on which Soviet Kazak culture was built. In the film, on the other hand, lavish sets transported the audience to another time and place, before the Russians brought their civilization. It distanced the contemporary audience while it engages Kazak history in significant ways. It should not surprise us that following independence *The Silk Maiden* became the most played film on Kazak television.

## Conclusion

*The Silk Maiden* represented an ambitious shift in cultural creation.<sup>59</sup> The film manifested a 1970s era Soviet minority reply to the adages of socialist realism. Heroes of the

---

<sup>58</sup> A. Kairbaev, *Vstrechi na ekrane: rasskazy o kazakhskom kino* (Alma-Ata: Zhalyln, 1979): 36-7.

<sup>59</sup> This tendency contrasted with other popular and critically acclaimed contemporary Central Asian films, such as *End of the Ataman* (Shaken Aimanov, 1970) and *The Seventh Bullet* (Ali Khamraev, 1972) that discuss civil war themes in Central Asia. These are native variations of Alexander Motyl's *White Sun of the Desert* (1969).

## THIS IS A DRAFT – NOT INTENDED FOR CITATION

original epic drama replaced stock characters. The requisite pro-Russian messages were eliminated, and European musical “modernization” and styles were replaced. In fact, we witness Kazaks in an intermediary role between Russian and Chinese interests in key scene depicting Tulegen’s father in chess game among them. Through *The Silk Maiden* history came alive with new lessons and Kazak perspectives.<sup>60</sup>

If we reconsider this film through the lens of traditional scholarship on Soviet cinema, we are left with valuable insights into its transformation. According to Peter Kenez, cinema reflects both the regime’s explicit policies towards the arts and their subconscious beliefs.<sup>61</sup> Tracing both these conscious and unconscious designs offers us a valuable tool for analysis. Moreover, cinema is part of the cultural system of hegemony and it provides an opportunity for the regime in power to present its own messages. By 1970, the evolution of the Soviet regime evident in the performance of *The Silk Maiden* revealed a great deal of native autonomy in artistic interpretation and political messages. This trend continued in the late-1980s with the celebrated “Kazakh New Wave” as an extension of the policies of the Brezhnev era and the concurrent experimentation with cinema among nationalities.<sup>62</sup>

The recent DVD release of *The Silk Maiden*, contained the following introductory note: “With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the master copies of important Kazak films remained in the Russian Film Archive. The Kazakhfilm Studio, with the comprehensive support of TuranAlem Bank, was able to return them to the native viewer.” That a post-Soviet commerce-oriented bank would support the restoration and promotion of a Soviet film speaks to the

---

<sup>60</sup> One way of looking at this is through an understanding of the movement from “nations on stage” to “nations engaged.”

<sup>61</sup> Peter Kenez, *Cinema and Soviet Society, 1917-1953* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

<sup>62</sup> Andrew Horton and Michael Brashinsky, eds., *The Zero Hour: Glasnost and Soviet Cinema in Transition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992): 238-

THIS IS A DRAFT – NOT INTENDED FOR CITATION

nationalist agenda of the film and to its currency with contemporary viewers as well as today.

The more recent *Nomad* (by the trio of directors: Ivan Passer, Sergei Bodrov, and Talgat

Temenov, 2005) attempts this same national filmic project. Incidentally, the film again confronts

the Kalmyk threat to Kazaks in the eighteenth century.