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CENTRAL ASIA XV. MODERN LITERATURE

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xv. Modern Literature

Central Asian literatures in the twentieth century have developed under diverse influences. Beside classical and modern Persian literature and the poetic traditions and folklore of the Central Asian peoples themselves, Russian thought and letters have been predominant. Since the 1920s Soviet economic and social policies have offered Central Asian writers new subjects and encouraged new modes of expression, but they have also imposed ideological principles at times so strictly enforced as to discourage true creativity (see below). Yet, centuries-old literary traditions survived the vicissitudes of political activism and in recent decades have strengthened the resurgent sense of national identity. The present article is based upon Kazakh, Kirghiz, Tajik, and Uzbek literatures.

Before the Revolution. At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth Central Asian writers were still beholden to their Persian and Islamic heritage. Traditional forms and meters predominated, and the literary languages, often filled with Persian, Arabic, and archaic Turkic words and constructions, had been little affected by the vernaculars. Poetry was the favored medium of expression, while prose was reserved for short tales of amusement,

history, and, occasionally, social commentary. Literary tradition was reinforced by a conservative political and social system, which was sustained by native rulers and the Russian bureaucracy. The Muslim clergy wielded a heavy hand in literary matters. As the protectors of the holy tradition they exercised a decisive influence over societies that were largely illiterate. Not surprisingly, the literature which they and the secular authorities patronized consisted mainly of poems in praise of sitting rulers, mystical pieces, and commentaries on sacred writings.

Nonetheless, at least two significant currents of change had already manifested themselves. The older may be described as "enlightenment," for its advocates favored the application of rational thought and modern knowledge to overcome the social and economic backwardness of their peoples. They looked chiefly to Europe (or, rather, European Russia) as the source of reforms and hoped that Russia could serve as an intermediary. In Bukhara, a major center for Central Asian intellectuals, the outstanding "enlightener" was the Tajik Ahmad Doniš (Aḥmad Dāneš, 1827-97). Cosmopolitan in his interests, he was better acquainted with the West than perhaps any other Bukharan of the day. But he was also devoted to his homeland and was best known for his prose commentaries on the great issues of contemporary Central Asian society, such as *Nawāder al-waqāyeʿ* (Rare events, composed in 1295/1875 and 1300/1883). Representative of the same current was Abai Qunanbaev (Kunanbaev; 1845-1904), the leader of the Kazakh intellectuals oriented toward European Russia. Educated in the Oriental classics, he was thoroughly grounded in Persian, Arabic, Chaghatay poetry and Islamic religious doctrine, but he also admired Russian literature and through Russian translations became acquainted with Western literature and social thought. Throughout his career he sought bridges between Central Asia and the West but maintained a critical attitude toward both. In his poetry he turned from abstract, metaphorical language to a more direct diction and sought themes in contemporary social problems. But he never ceased to acknowledge his debt to the Kazakh epic tradition and folklore.

In the two decades preceding the Russian Revolution of 1917 a second current of change, characterized by a growing consciousness of cultural and religious identity and an impatience with social and economic stagnation, spread among younger Central Asian intellectuals. Known as Jadidism, this ferment expressed itself in strong Pan-Turkic and Pan-Islamic sentiments and led to sustained efforts at educational reform and the founding of a native press.

This generation was more nationalist than Doniš and Qunanbaev.

Poetry. This was the favored means of expression among the Jadids. They had all had a classical education and were steeped in the works of Central Asian and Persian writers, and they demonstrated a mastery of classical meters. Some of them continued to write love poetry and to use the traditional literary languages, but increasingly they became preoccupied with social questions and tried to fashion a language appropriate to the new subject matter and accessible to the broader public. The Tajik Sadriddin Aini (Ṣadr-al-Dīn ʿAynī, 1878-1954), an admirer of Doniš who wrote in both Central Asian Persian and Chaghatay (Uzbek; see chaghatay language and literature), took as his main themes education and culture (*Ḥasrat* "Grief," 1913) and meditated on the religious strife between Muslims (*Fājeʿa-ye šīʿa wa sonnī* "The tragedy of Shiites and Sunnites," 1910). Ahmad Baitursunov (1873-1937), the leading Kazakh writer of the time, went further, treating poetry as a tool for social change. He was eager to mold the Kazakh language into a proper vehicle for a modern culture, but in advocating social reform, he urged a reliance upon the native tradition. Omar Qarašev (Karashev; 1876-1921) interwove social concerns with forms adapted from the work of the traditional Kazakh epic poets (*aqïn*s). Modest innovations were also taking place in prose. The Bukharan Abdurauf Fitrat (ʿAbd-al-Raʿūf Feṭrat; 1886-1938), a major influence on the literary life of the period, composed a number of influential works in Persian that were meant to entertain as well as instruct, notably *Monāẓara* ("The dispute," 1909), the account of a discussion between a reformer and a traditionalist, and *Bayānāt-e ṣayyāḥ-e hendī* ("Tales of a Hindu traveler," 1912), in which a Bukharan describes to his foreign guest the decadence into which his beloved city has fallen. The Kazakh poet Sultan-Mahmud Toruaigyrov (Sultan-Maxmüt Torayğïrov, Russ. Sultan-Makhmud Toraĭgyrov; 1893-1920) experimented with the novel. In *Qamar sulu* ("Qamar the beautiful," 1914), a lyric piece about a young woman in traditional Kazakh society, he had recourse to verse to express the deep emotions of his main characters. To the Uzbek editor and critic Mahmud Behbudiy (Maḥmūd Behbūdī, 1874-1919) belongs the distinction of having introduced modern drama into Central Asian literature with *Padarkuš* ("The patricide," 1911, in Chaghatay), which posits the formation of a national intelligentsia as a prerequisite for the liberation of the Muslim peoples.

The Soviet regime installed in the wake of the 1917 Revolution set Central Asian literatures on a new course. By recognizing distinct ethnic nations, it pro-

vided a political framework within which "national talents" could develop. New literary languages, drawing upon the grammatical patterns and vocabulary of the vernaculars and increasingly influenced by Russian, were gradually created. The five-year plans of industrialization and agricultural collectivization and the eradication of "obsolete" customs and mentalities offered writers new themes, but required them to assume new social responsibilities and to use Soviet Russian literature as their model in both form and content.

The efforts of Communist activists in the 1920s to mobilize Central Asian writers for the building of a "new society" were hindered by clashes between "nationalists" and the supporters of the new order. Many adherents of Jadidism opposed the new cultural norms and continued to pursue Pan-Turkic or Pan-Islamic ideals. Ranged against them were the promoters of the so-called proletarian culture, who demanded that literature serve the immediate needs of society and belittled the importance of artistic inspiration and form. The 1920s, therefore, were a period of lively intellectual give-and-take, but such "disorder" was incompatible with the goals of the Communist Party. In the early 1930s it moved decisively to impose literary uniformity by establishing writers' unions in each of the recently created Central Asian republics and by linking them to the Union of Soviet Writers in Moscow. Henceforth, these organizations were responsible for enforcing the new ideological and esthetic principles, which came to be known as socialist realism and were crucial in determining an author's choice of theme and his handling of plot and character. They impressed upon him the need to remain close to the working masses, to be guided by *partiĭnost'*, that is, party directives concerning creative activity, and to remember that his function was not simply to reflect reality, but to change it.

For Central Asian poetry the 1920s were a period of transition. Older poets, such as the Tajik Muhammad Zufarḵon Javhari (Zufar Khan Jawharī, Russ. Mukhammad Zufarkhon Dzhavkhari; 1860-1945), who remained faithful to a lyricism based upon classical form and meter and devoid of social content, could not adjust to the new literary order and faded into obscurity. But younger poets were more successful in bridging the gap between old and new creative theories. The Tajik lyric poet Pairav Sulaimoni (Peyrow Solaymānī, 1899-1933) turned to socially relevant themes, as in *Šokūfa-ye ʿerfān yā ḵᵛod-āzādī-e zanān-e šarq* ("The blossom of knowledge or the self-liberation of the women of the east," 1926), and though he respected the canons of the *ʿarūż*, he

experimented boldly with the free verse of Mayakovsky and introduced ordinary speech into his work. Abdulhamid Čülpan (1898-1938), the finest Uzbek lyric poet of the time, combined traditional and modern techniques and drew inspiration from folk poetry in volumes of verse such as *Buloqlar* ("Springs," 1924) and *Tong sirläri* ("The secrets of dawn," 1926).

Of the many poets who embraced the new social themes, none did so more enthusiastically than Abu'l-Qāsem Lāhūtī (1887-1957), the first major Soviet Tajik poet. A Persian revolutionary, who emigrated to the Soviet Union in 1922, he became the poet of the radical transformation of Tajik society, adapting traditional genres and meters to the rules of socialist realism. His technique is evident in the story *Tāj wa bayrāq* ("The crown and the banner," 1935), an epic poem about socialist construction in agriculture which depicts work brigades on a kolkhoz competing with one another in the manner of the monumental battles in the *Šāh-nāma*.

Younger poets, whose intellectual and esthetic values had been formed after 1917 and who came to the fore in the 1930s, adhered faithfully to the canons of civic poetry. They sought themes in the fulfillment of economic plans and Soviet foreign policy, contrasting the backward and oppressive past with the bright future held out to the peoples of the East by Soviet Communism, and they wrote in a language accessible to a wide audience. Among Uzbek poets, Ḡafur Ḡulom (1903-66) in such works as *Dinamu* ("Dynamo," 1931) and Mirtamir Tursunov (1910-78) in *Zafar* ("Victory," 1929), extolled the accomplishments of the builders of the new Communist society. Säbit Müqanov (Sabit Mukanov; 1900-73) was the first important Kazakh poet to embrace the new style and subject matter and to abandon the adornments and abstractions of classical verse in poems about daily life on the kolkhoz and May Day. These men were the vanguard of the so-called proletarian writers who replaced the lyric poets of the preceding decade. Yet, there were also poets whose work combined social consciousness with a deep attachment to traditional form and meter. The Tajik Mirzā Tursūnzāda (1911-77) admired the music of classical Persian verse and the concision and directness of folk poetry, but chose contemporary problems as his themes. In his first major work, *Ḵāzan wa bahār* ("Autumn and spring," 1937), he praised the kolkhoz as assuring a bright future for the peasantry. The Kazakh Tuïïr Žarokov (1908-65) also sang of five-year plans, but at the same time he composed delicate love poetry much influenced by classical Persian poetry and Pushkin and remained indebted to the Kazakh oral tradition in his songs about the legendary hero

(*batïr*) and the Kazakh uprisings against Russian colonizers.

World War II constituted a short literary interregnum. To be sure, poets fulfilled their patriotic duty of arousing support for the war effort. Tursunzoda's *maṭnawī* on the theme of the brotherhood of Soviet peoples joined together in a common effort against the invader, *Pesar-e waṭan* ("Son of the fatherland," 1942), was typical. But a kind of lyrical and national re-awakening also occurred. Mirsaδid Miršakar (b. 1912), drawing upon folklore and the lives of ordinary men and women from his native Pamir region, composed an extraordinarily moving portrait of the Tajik miner in the story, *Ādamān az bām-e jahān* ("Men from the roof of the world," 1943). But with the end of the war and during the following decade literary activity came again under the close scrutiny of party ideologists. Prudent writers conformed to the directives of Andrei Zhdanov, the chief cultural theoretician of the Soviet Communist Party, who elaborated an extreme version of socialist realism.

Literature was again fully subordinated to the resumed drive for industrialization and increased agricultural production. Party activists renewed their vigilance against "nationalism," by which they meant stylistic and thematic influences from Persian, Turkic, and Arabic literatures, and local writers' unions discouraged the use of classical meters and symbols as unsuited for a socialist society. What might be called "production poetry" was thus very much in vogue. Yet, utilitarian themes could also serve as a framework for good poetry. Tursūnzāda's *Hasan-i arobakaš* (*Ḥasan-e ʿarrābakaš* "Hasan the cart-driver," 1954), which portrays the transformation of Tajikistan in the 1920s and 1930s, focuses on an ordinary man and his sweetheart as they cope with rapidly changing social and economic conditions. In composition Tursūnzāda adhered closely to the *ʿarūż* meter and the quatrain form and succeeded in establishing the story (*doston/dāstān*, Russ. *poèma*, or "verse novel," *roman v stikhakh*) as a significant genre in Soviet Tajik poetry.

Prose. Between the 1920s and 1950s prose followed a path similar to that of poetry. Most striking perhaps was the transition from the classical art of storytelling to the realistic, at times stark, depiction of character and plot. From the 1930s on under the watchful eye of party stalwarts authors concerned themselves almost exclusively with immediate economic and social questions and sought to fashion a prose language that would unambiguously convey the desired message to the mass public. Short fiction generally predominated until the end of World War II. The traditional *ḥekāya* retained its influence, even in longer fiction, despite constant admonitions to follow

Soviet Russian models. As with poetry, the war offered writers an opportunity to explore their people's history in a positive light and to stir national feeling by recounting the deeds of legendary and real heroes. But when the war ended and the urgency of mobilizing non-Russians in defense of the Soviet homeland had passed, ideological conformity was reimposed more rigidly than before 1941.

Two masters of fiction published their first novels in the 1920s. Abdullah Qadiriy (ʿAbd-Allāh Qāderī, 1894-1940), who combined a classical education in Persian, Chaghatay, and Arabic with the enlightened teachings of the Jadids, was the founder of the Uzbek novel. His *Ötgan kunlar* ("Days gone by," 1926), a somber tale of an arranged marriage, and *Mehrobdan čayon* ("The scorpion from the pulpit," 1929), the story of an orphan who rises to high office, are balanced and subtle studies of character which exerted great influence on his fellow Uzbek novelist, Aybek, and the Kazakh polymath, Mukhtar Auezov (Müqtar Äuezov). The works of Sadriddin Aini also offer insight into the evolution of prose before the war. The three novels he published between 1924 and 1934 document the stages of development of socialist realism and establish him as the founder of Soviet Tajik realist prose. The short novel *Ādīna yā sargoḏašt-e yak tājīk-e kambaḡal. Az ḵāṭera-ye goḏašta* ("Adina, or the adventures of a poor Tajik; from the memory of the past," 1924), which describes the changes brought about in the traditional way of life of mountain peasants, reveals a transition from old prose techniques of loose plot construction and ample poetic interventions to a down-to-earth style. In *Doḵunda* ("Dakhunda," 1928), the first full-length Tajik novel, the new hero of the Soviet era made his appearance in the person of Yādgār, a poor peasant who evolves from a passive observer of events to a self-conscious revolutionary determined to lead his community to a better life. *Ḡolāmān* (the slaves, 1934), a sweeping chronicle of Tajik peasant life from the nineteenth century to the era of collectivization and the major work of Tajik fiction before 1945, suggests Aini's accommodation to socialist realism in subject matter, but reveals no artistic compromises in the portrayal of character. In all these works the essence of the Tajik village and the didactic tradition of Eastern prose maintain their hold on the author.

In the hands of other writers early experiments with the novel were less successful. Rambling plots and stereotyped characters abounded, and in depicting workers and peasants building the new society, authors were satisfied with externals and neglected inner feelings and motivations.

Characteristic were the works of Säbit Müqanov, the first important Kazakh prose writer. In *Žumbaq žalau* ("The mysterious banner," 1938, later published as *Botagoz*), for example, he chronicled the great social and political changes taking place in Kazakh society against the background of revolution and civil war. He was also eager to create the new Kazakh hero, one quite different from the *batyr* of the epics, who would be patterned after the Communist party leader omnipresent in Soviet Russian literature and would lead the struggle against the old order of the kulaks (*bay*s). A similar approach to plot the character informs the first Kirghiz novel, *Keŋ-Suu* ("Keng-Suu," 1935), by Tugelbai Sydykbekov (b. 1912), a work which laid the foundations of Kirghiz literary socialist realism. The author attempted to create the "new man" in the person of the head of a kolkhoz, but his hero lacked individuality and emotional complexity. A notable exception to this monotonous fare was *Abai* ("Abai," 1st part, 1942, 2nd part, 1947), Mukhtar Auezov's (1897-1961) novel about Abai Qunanbaev, which won him the Stalin prize and international renown. Against the rich panorama of nineteenth-century Kazakh social life Auezov recreated the ideals and sensibilities of his illustrious predecessor, whose work he prized as the zenith of idealism and creativity of the Kazakh people.

The novel. This came into its own as a leading literary genre after World War II, but until the latter 1950s theme and character were subordinated to civic purposes. Novels focused on the heroic defense of the Soviet fatherland by all its peoples and the continued building of socialism, and they were peopled by stilted heroes and villains, who represented abstract concepts of good and evil rather than flesh-and-blood individuals. The hero, the "new man" of Soviet society, was typically a product of Soviet institutions or the party apparatus and, irrepressively optimistic, he was a model of self-discipline and commitment to the cause. The villains were portrayed in no less absolute terms and were drawn from all those elements of the population judged to be evil by Soviet authorities. Besides landowners and "nationalists," the Muslim clergy came under relentless attack. Beginning in the 1920s as the general Soviet anti-religious campaign spread to Central Asia, Islamic themes disappeared or were ridiculed, and the clergy was subjected to crude caricatures. Writers were admonished also to avoid "cosmopolitanism," a grave breach of socialist patriotism consisting of admiration for Persian, Turkish, or Arabic culture. Communist cultural managers insisted that the Muslim peoples of the Soviet Union were distinct from other Muslims and had a social and cultural life of their own within the extended Soviet family of

peoples.

The artistic consequences of these ideological constraints were almost always unfortunate. Production novels abounded. The Tajik Sotim Ulugzoda (Sātem Ologzāda, b. 1911) covered all the familiar themes of life on the kolkhoz, including the omnipresent struggle between old and new mentalities and the inspired leadership of party activists, in *Navobod* (*Now ābād* "The new land," 1953). His colleague, Jalol Ikromi (Jalāl Ekrāmī, b. 1909), in *Šodiy* (*Šādī* "Shadi," 1957) produced a one-dimensional portrait of the Communist head of a kolkhoz, whose sole passion, production, molds his personality. Kazakh, Kirghiz, and Uzbek novelists followed a similar path. They were the ones who received official honors, but others, who strayed from the prescribed formulas, were subjected to harsh criticism. Oybek (Āybak; 1905-68), the talented successor of Qadiriy, was awarded the Stalin prize for *Navoiy* (1944), his novel about the great fifteenth-century Chaghatay poet, Alisher Navoiy (ʿAlīšīr Navāʾī), but was taken to task by the Tajik scholar ʿAbd-al-Ḡanī Mīrzāev for his idealization of the Uzbek cultural past and for his use of "obsolete" phrases and Persian and Arabic words. Auezov felt obliged to alter the tone and portrayal of character in the second volume of his novel about Abai Qunanbaev, *Abai joly* ("The road of Abai"; two parts, 1952 and 1956), in order to appease Russian sensibilities and satisfy party ideological concerns. In such an atmosphere it is not surprising that Aini turned away from fiction to write his memoirs about pre-revolutionary Bukhara, *Yāddāšthā* (4 vols., 1949-54).

Drama. The development of drama in Central Asia before the Russian Revolution was uneven. Behbudiy's *Padarkuš* marked the beginnings of modern Uzbek drama, but among the Tajiks "plays" until the latter 1920s were simply performances by folk poets and dance ensembles who followed the oral tradition. In the 1920s Soviet authorities raised the status of drama by using it to promote their social and economic programs among a population that was still largely illiterate. Subject matter and character were those found in the poetry and fiction of the time. Typical were the plays of Hamza Hakimzoda Niyoziy (Hamza Ḥakīmzāda Nīāzī, 1889-1929), an erstwhile Jadid who enthusiastically embraced the new order. In *Maisaraning iši* ("Maisary's deeds," 1926) he depicted the struggle of progressive forces, led by the new woman, against the remnants of the old order, represented by the *bay*s.

Between the latter 1920s and the 1950s these themes and characters were adapted to fit the needs of new political struggles and economic five-year plans. The products of Tajik drama, which rapidly matured after the

establishment of a Tajik national theater in 1929, were characteristic. Mirzo Tursunzoda (Mīrzā Tursūnzāda) attacked the lingering "nationalism" of certain intellectuals in *Hukm* (*Ḥokm* "The verdict," 1933); Jalāl Ekrāmi wrote the first Tajik play about factory life, *Dušman* (*Došman* "The enemy," 1933); and Sotim Ulugzoda retold the perennial conflict between good and evil on the kolkhoz in *Šodmon* (*Šādmān* "Shodmon," 1939). The leading Uzbek dramatist of the period, Komil Yašin (Kamil Yashen; b. 1909), found inspiration in similar subject matter: struggles against "bourgeois nationalists," in *Ikki Kommunist* ("Two Communists," 1928) and the emancipation of women and the triumph of socialist consciousness over the old mentality on the kolkhoz in *Nomus va muhabbat* (*Nāmūs wa moḥabbat* "Honor and love," 1935). A depiction of Kazakhstan during the civil war in *Amankeldi* ("Amankeldi," 1935), by the Kazakh playwright, Khabit Müsrepov (Ḡabit Müsirepov, Russ. Gabit Musrepov; 1902-85), brought lavish praise from official critics, who judged it a perfect example of socialist realism. For a decade after World War II its rules kept drama within the same narrow creative bounds as poetry and fiction. Nazir Safarov's (1905-85) *Šarq tangi* ("Dawn of the East," 1948), which chronicled the growth of class consciousness among Uzbek workers under the guidance of the Russian proletariat, was typical fare.

Recent developments. Since the latter 1950s Central Asian writers have taken advantage of loosened ideological constraints to approach the problems of society and probe the human condition more deeply and from a more personal vantage point than had been possible since the 1920s. Many looked inward for literary themes and spoke directly to their readers. *Sisad-o šast-o šiš puhlu* ("366 degrees," 1963-64), by the Tajik Ḡafor Mirzo (Ḡaffār Mīrzā, b. 1929), suggested what was happening in poetry. He experimented boldly with form in this frank conversation with the reader about the past year's events, allowing his hero, who is both observer and participant, to hold together the loosely connected parts of the poem. The Kirghiz poet Süyünbai Eraliev (b. 1921) carried on similar experiments, using blank verse in *Jïldïzdarga sayakat* ("Journey to the stars," 1966; first published in *Ala-Tou*, 1964, no. 4), which official critics found too innovative in form and too cosmopolitan in content. Still others such as the Kazakh Erkesh Ibrahim (b. 1930) in *Tamirtan tolḡauy* ("Tamirtan melodies," 1978) and *Samḡau* ("Fusion," 1985) explored the sources of national identity. Many poets in the 1970s and 1980s turned from great civic issues to their own thoughts and feelings. Women poets, notably the Uzbek Gulchehra Nurullaeva (b. 1938) in *Paḵta hidi* ("The smell of cotton," 1981) have written of beauty, love, and family in deeply personal lyrics. Poets of her

generation and of the one following have shown a greater concern for the philosophical and social essence of things than with their external manifestations.

Dramatists have continued to focus their attention on prevailing social problems, but they have abandoned the old formulas of production and class struggle. They have made their heroes and villains more human as they penetrated more deeply into the motivations of individual behavior. In *Hurriat* (named after the heroine, 1959) Uighun (b. 1905) examines the enhanced role of the Uzbek woman in society, but he shows how her public and private lives were interwoven and how personal emotions and experiences molded behavior; in the sequence, *Parvoz* ("Flight," 1968), Hurriyat becomes the secretary of the local committee of the communist party. The new approach is also evident in Sotim Ulug̃zoda's comedy, *Gawhar-e šabčarog̃* ("The marvelous jewel," 1962), which treats human foibles in a light-hearted manner unthinkable during the Stalin era.

Similar innovations were manifest in prose. *Dar on dunyo* (*Dar ān donyā* "In that world," 1966), by the Tajik Fazliddin Muhammadiev (1928-86), suggests how far the novel in Central Asia had traveled since the 1930s. The plot has to do with a pilgrimage to Mecca by a group of Central Asians as seen through the eyes of a doctor, an atheist, who accompanies them. The superstition and commercialism the pilgrims encounter on their journey present the author with frequent opportunities for satire and sarcasm, but he is restrained in his treatment of this sensitive issue (see also Ro'i). In any case, it is clear that these matters form merely the outer shell of the novel. They are the occasion for the author to reflect upon eternal themes: the meaning of human existence and the nature of happiness. Many novelists turned to topics that had long been taboo. In *Diyonat* (*Dīānat* "integrity," 1978) the Uzbek Odil Yoqubov (Adil Yakubov; b. 1926) dealt with the purge of the old political leaders and Jadid intellectuals in the 1930s and their replacement by men of lesser ability who accepted the new Soviet regime simply to get ahead. The Kirghiz novelist Čing̃iz Aitmatov (b. 1928) made a similar sweeping condemnation of the bureaucracy for its practice of crushing all who tried to live in accordance with high ethical standards in *Proshchaĭ, Gyul'sary* ("Farewell, Gulsari," 1966, in Russ.). Striking, too, is the more balanced handling of character. No longer did the heroes (and the villains) conform to timeworn formulas, but stood out as distinct personalities, as authors, such as the Tajik novelist Muhiddin Khojaev (b. 1938) in *Ob-rūšnoī* (*Āb-rowšanāʾī* "Water-light," 2 vols., 1973-75),

probed their emotional and spiritual development.

Since the 1970s and 1980s Central Asian writers have turned increasingly for inspiration to their native cultural and intellectual heritage. They had, in fact, never abandoned it, despite the homogenizing effects of ideological controls applied from Moscow, but now they could draw more freely upon classical Persian and Turkic literatures and a rich history and folklore and could interpret the contemporary life of their respective peoples more in accordance with national traditions and sensibilities. The signs of change are everywhere. In Odil Yoqubov's novel, *Ulugʻbek ḵazinasi* ("The treasure of Ulugbeg," 1974), "archaic" Turkic, Persian, and Arabic words and expressions have returned in abundance, and the hero of his *Diyonat*, the man of integrity, is well acquainted with the Uzbek people's Islamic past and observes many of their traditions, even though he is not religious, and knows Persian and Arabic. These trends are likely to continue, for increasingly authors have defended the integrity of the creative process against official critics. Čingiz Aitmatov's response to those who demanded changes in his novel, *Ak keme* ("The white steamship," 1970, in Russ. *Belyĭ parokhod*), is typical: he refused to violate the artistic conception of his work.

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