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### Settling the past: Soviet oriental projects in Leningrad and Alma-Ata

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# Introduction

## **The Politicization of Oriental Studies**

The main goal of this dissertation is to analyze the history of Kazakh Oriental studies between the 1920s and 1980s in the Soviet context of science-power relations. My focus is on the academic discourse of Soviet Orientalists about historical sources from Central Asia. I thereby focus on the connection between philological/ historical research and archeological work on the medieval and early modern periods.

The research literature on my topic reveals two opposing opinions on my subject. On the one hand, scholars who had been part of the scientific projects that my thesis is about give generally a very positive evaluation of those projects; they maintain that these projects were characterized by a purely scientific approach. On the other hand, the critics of Soviet sciences consider all Orientalist work to be political in the first place.

In between there are several major authors who maintain intermediary positions, who concede that there was a clear political agenda behind the state support for Orientalist work on Kazakhstan, but who also say that individual scholars maintained their agency, and that Soviet Oriental Studies did indeed produce a significant amount of important research that has not lost its value, and that was not compromised by the political setting to a high degree.

My material supports, in many aspects, this intermediary position; but it also demonstrates the rigidity of the political framework in which Soviet Orientalists worked.

## **The Study of Oriental Studies in Russia and the Soviet Union**

Soviet Oriental Studies were in many respects the heir to Imperial Russian Orientology. A discussion by Adeb Khalid, Nathaniel Knight, and Maria Todorova about the 'Russian soul' of Russian Orientalism in the pre-Soviet period up to the 1920s demonstrated that there is not one common picture of the Russian Orientalist: some scholars were indeed actively involved in imperialist politics, were engaged as officials and advisors of the government, while others distanced themselves from politics; and many expert voices were

simply not heard by those in power.<sup>1</sup> British historian Vera Tolz, in her recent work on these issues, distinguishes between several groups of experts on the Orient who had different views and agendas. For the second half of the nineteenth century Tolz distinguished between academic Orientalists, Christian missionaries and government officials. Secondly, Tolz suggests to move from the study of the overall relationship between Oriental studies and imperialism further to “the impact of the goals of nation-building [...] on the research agendas, the public activities, and a sense of self-identity of academic Orientalists.”<sup>2</sup> This perspective is also at the center of my work: to bring the discussion closer to the individuals who framed and determined the course of Soviet Oriental scholarship on Kazakhstan.

In her study of the intellectual history of the Russian intelligentsia in the late Imperial and early Soviet periods Tolz concentrated on the ideas and biographies of significant Orientalists, especially on Arabist Baron V.P. Rozen (1849-1908) and his school in St. Petersburg.<sup>3</sup> The other major monograph on this topic, David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye’s “Russian Orientalism”, studies the institutional development of the Tsarist Orientology in Kazan’ and St. Petersburg, and he also focusses on a number of outstanding scholars (but also painters and writers), such as Aleksandr Kazem-Bek (1802-1870); and most importantly, Schimmelpenninck van der Oye regards Russian Orientalism as a cultural phenomenon.<sup>4</sup> There are a number of other recent works on more particular cases, such as Angela Brintlinger’s article on the great Russian writer Aleksandr Griboedov (1795-

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<sup>1</sup> A. Khalid, “Russian History and the Debate over Orientalism,” in: *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 1 (4) (Fall 2000), 691-699; N. Knight, “Grigor’ev in Orenburg, 1851-1862: Russian Orientalism in the Service of Empire?” in: *Slavic Review* 59: 1 (Spring 2000), 74-100; N. Knight, “On Russian Orientalism: A Response to Adeeb Khalid,” in: *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 1 (4) (Fall 2000), 701-15; M. Todorova, “Does Russian Orientalism Have a Russian Soul? A Contribution to the Debate between Nathaniel Knight and Adeeb Khalid,” in: *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 1 (4) (Fall 2000), 717-27. See also: A. Morrison, “‘Applied Orientalism’ in British India and Tsarist Turkestan,” in: *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 2009 (51/3), 619-647.

<sup>2</sup> V. Tolz, “Orientalism, Nationalism and Ethnic Diversity in Late Imperial Russia,” in: *The Historical Journal* 48, 1 (2005), 130-131.

<sup>3</sup> V. Tolz, “European, National and (Anti-) Imperial: The Formation of Academic Oriental Studies in Late Tsarist and Early Soviet Russia,” in: *Kritika* 9, 1 (2008), 53-82; *ibid.*, *Russian Academicians and the Revolution: Combining Professionalism and Politics* (London, 1997); *ibid.*, *Russia’s Own Orient: The Politics of Identity and Oriental Studies in the Late Imperial and Early Soviet Periods* (Oxford, 2011).

<sup>4</sup> D. Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, *Russian Orientalism: Asia in the Russian Mind from Peter the Great to the Emigration* (New Haven & London, 2010); *ibid.*, “Mirza Kazem-Bek and the Kazan School of Russian Orientology,” in: *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, vol. 28, no. 3 (2008), 443-458. The Russian translation of the last article: “Mirza Kazem-Bek i Kazanskaia shkola vostokovedeniia,” in: I.V. Gerasimov et al. (eds.), *Novaia imperskaia istoriia postsovetskogo prostranstva* (Kazan’, 2004), 256-69.

1829) as an Orientalist who “could not separate knowledge from the power associated with the East and his role there.”<sup>5</sup>

Against this new interest in “Imperial Orientalism” and Orientology (as the academic discipline on the Orient) it is quite natural that also the Soviet period invited for studies. By contrast to the previous era, with its many individual scholars, after 1917 Soviet Oriental Studies emerged as a state-organized discipline for clear political purposes. In his trilogy on the history of early Soviet discourses on Islam and on two prominent authors, Michael Kemper portrays Soviet Orientology as the extreme case of politicization.<sup>6</sup> Kemper and Conermann edited a collective volume devoted to the phenomenon of Soviet Oriental studies,<sup>7</sup> in which not only Western but also scholars from the former Soviet Union review the “Soviet schools” of Orientology in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including also the memoirs of the eminent Arabist Amri R. Shikhsaidov and the prominent Tatar historian Mirkasym A. Usmanov who strove for the establishment of Oriental Studies centers in their respective home republics, Daghestan and Tatarstan. Equally important is the work of Stéphane Dudoignon on the relation between academic and religious research on Islam in the USSR, including his reflections on the impact of Soviet academics on the rehabilitation of Islam in the former Soviet south.<sup>8</sup>

While Western approaches to Soviet Orientology are framed by the discourse on “Orientalism”, and by over thirty years of debates around Edward Said’s famous critique of Western Orientalism and Oriental Studies as colonial instruments,<sup>9</sup> this whole debate seems to have largely gone unnoticed in the former Soviet Union; in Russia, and even more so in Central Asia and the Caucasus, the old connection between Oriental scholarship and state policies is still very much alive, and rarely reflected upon. Thus the first Russian

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<sup>5</sup> A. Brintlinger, “The Persian Frontier: Griboedov as Orientalist and Literary Hero,” in: *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, vol. 45, no. 3/4 (September-December 2003), 376.

<sup>6</sup> M. Kemper, “Ljutsian Klimovič, der ideologische Bluthund der sowjetischen Islamkunde und Zentralasienliteratur,” *Asiatische Studien / Etudes asiatiques* LXIII (2009), 93-133; *ibid.*, “Red Orientalism: Mikhail Pavlovich and Marxist Oriental Studies in Early Soviet Russia,” *Die Welt des Islams* 50 (2010), 435-476; *ibid.*, “The Soviet Discourse on the Origin and Class Character of Islam, 1923-1933,” *Die Welt des Islams*, 2009/ 1 (49), 1-48.

<sup>7</sup> M. Kemper, S. Conermann (eds.), *The Heritage of Soviet Oriental Studies* (London and New York, 2011).

<sup>8</sup> S. A. Dudoignon, “Un orientalisme ‘progressiste’ et ses effets collatéraux: les suds de l’URSS après Staline,” in François Pouillon & Jean-Claude Vatin (eds.), *Après l’orientalisme: L’Orient créé par l’Orient* (Paris : Karthala, 2011), 267-284.

<sup>9</sup> E. Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1978).

full translation of Said's book appeared only in 2006,<sup>10</sup> which prompted the prominent Moscow-based Arabist and historian of the North Caucasus Vladimir Bobrovnikov to ask his readers: "Why are we so marginal?"<sup>11</sup> To be sure, important questions related to Orientalism were also raised in the work of anthropologist Sergei Abashin and archeologist Svetlana Gorshenina, but these seem to have had more impact in the West than in Russia.<sup>12</sup> Russian Orientalists of today, in the two big academic research institutes in Moscow (Institute of Oriental Studies, IVAN) and in St. Petersburg (Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, formerly the Leningrad Branch of IVAN) rarely enter into a conceptual debate about the Russian Orientalist experience; in the good old fashion of Russian/Soviet empiricism, Russian colleagues limit themselves to publishing archival materials and producing biographies of prominent individual authors.<sup>13</sup> These works are very helpful for establishing facts and figures, but they usually fall short of a critical review of the politicization of Orientalology in the USSR. Important tools are also several recently published biographical dictionaries of Russian/Soviet orientalists, above all the third edition of Sof'ia D. Miliband's Dictionary of Soviet (now: Russian) Orientalists (based on the first edition of 1975 that had turned into a three-volume corpus in the 1990s). Mikhail K. Baskhanov produced two reference works on prerevolutionary Russian military Orientalists (an important aspect of Orientalology, in the light of the connection between orientalist knowledge and the military conquest of the East), and Ia.V. Vasil'kov and M.Iu. Sorokina edited a fine dictionary on the fates of Orientalists (in the very widest sense) who were repressed by the state, for the whole period between 1917 and 1991.<sup>14</sup> Next to these reference works Rus-

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<sup>10</sup> E.V. Said, *Orientalizm. Zapadnye kontseptsii Vostoka* (St. Petersburg, 2006).

<sup>11</sup> V. Bobrovnikov, "Pochemu my marginaly? Zametki na poliakh russkogo perevoda 'Orientalizma' Edvarda Saida," in: *Ab Imperio* 2 (2008), n.p.

<sup>12</sup> S.N. Abashin, "V.P. Nalivkin: "... budet tom chto neizbezhno dolzhno byt'; i to, chto neizbezhno dolzhno byt', uzhe ne mozhet byt'...". Krizis orientalizma v Rossiiskoi imperii?" in: *Aziatskaia Rossiia: liudi i struktury imperii* (Omsk, 2005), 43-96; S. Gorshenina, S. Abashin (eds.), *Le Turkestan Russe: Une colonie comme les autres?* (Tashkent, Paris, 2009); S. Gorshenina, *Galina Pugachenkova: perebiraia zhizni cherepki* (Tashkent, 2000); S. Gorshenina, C. Rapin, *Les archéologues en Asie centrale: de Kaboul à Samarcande* (Paris, 2001).

<sup>13</sup> *Neizvestnye stranitsy otechestvennogo vostokovedeniia*, ed. by V.V. Naumkin, 3 vols. (Moscow, 1997-2008).

<sup>14</sup> *Liudi i sud'by: biobibliograficheskii slovar' vostokovedov – zhertv politicheskogo terrora v sovetskii period (1917-1991)*, ed. by Ia.V. Vasil'kov and M.Iu. Sorokina (St. Petersburg, 2003); S.D. Miliband, *Vostokovedy Rossii XX-nachalo XXI v.: Biobibliograficheskii slovar'*, 2 vols. (Moscow, 2008); *Russkie voennye vostokovedy do 1917 goda, Biobibliograficheskii slovar'*, ed. by M.K. Baskhanov (Moscow, 2005).

sian Orientalists and historians published and important archive materials that had been closed in the Soviet period.<sup>15</sup> However, if Western authors are trying to conceptualize the history of Russian Oriental studies, post-Soviet authors rarely problematize these issues, preferring to publish only preliminary sources without a new theoretical cadre (and often maintaining the old one, in slightly different terms).

A study on Soviet Oriental studies needs a clear definition of this discipline. Following Yuri Bregel,<sup>16</sup> I will use the term ‘Orientalist’ for the specialists of the history and culture of the Orient who were trained in language(s) of the respective cultural area that they studied; this term “Orientalist” is thus meant as a profession without any a priori negative connotations. Oriental studies (in Russian: *vostokovedenie*) appears as a multiple scientific discipline which unified the study of the Orient in historical, social, linguistic, cultural, political and other aspects. The object and goals of this discipline are subjects of discussion in scholarship. This is a very classical definition that is also handled by the editors of the unique Russian textbook *Vostokovedenie*, intended for the students of the Oriental Faculty at St Petersburg University; it suggests that the Orient as an object of complex research can be understood either geographically or historically and culturally.<sup>17</sup> Geographically the Orient (*Vostok*) covers all Asian countries and northern Africa. In cultural terms the editors of this textbook define the Orient through the notion of *traditionalism* and of the authority of the past; this is, of course, already a more problematic approach, one that is not free of Eurocentrism.

Anyways, Soviet scholarship did indeed follow the common European notion of the Orient, though with some qualifications. First of all, Soviet scholars distinguished between the Soviet Orient (which typically comprised Central Asia and the Caucasus, but partly also the Volga-Urals and Siberia) and the Foreign Orient. In Soviet propaganda, the peoples of the Soviet Orient (*narody sovetskogo Vostoka*) were used as a showcase of success-

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<sup>15</sup> A.N. Samoilovich, *Tiurkskoe iazykoznanie. Filologiya. Runika* (Moscow, 2005); I.F. Popova (ed.), *Trudy vostokovedov v gody blokady Leningrada (1941-1944)* (Moscow, 2011).

<sup>16</sup> Yu. Bregel, *Notes on the Study of Central Asia* (Bloomington, 1996), 5, footnote 11. Iurii Enokhovich Bregel (b. 1925) is a renowned specialist in history of Islamic Central Asia. He started his scientific career in Moscow, but migrated to Israel in 1973 and worked in the United States since 1979. For a short biography see: D. DeWeese, “Preface,” in: D. DeWeese (ed.), *Studies on Central Asian History in Honor of Yuri Bregel* (Bloomington, 2001), ix-x.

<sup>17</sup> *Vvedenie v vostokovedenie: Obshchii kurs*, ed. by E.I. Zelenev and V.B. Kasevich (St Petersburg, 2011), 16.

ful socialist development; and in the research structures of the institutes, Soviet and Foreign Oriental research were neatly separated. The second big division was that between studies on the historical Orient and contemporary research. Classical Oriental studies investigated the distant past, mainly on the basis of textual evidence derived from manuscripts and epigraphic inscriptions. The “practical” Orientology studied the current situation in Eastern countries, which had an obvious political coloring and was understood as a background information for the Kremlin’s political decision making. In Soviet times there was, and still is, the widespread notion that the Moscow Orientalists were working “closer to the party demands” while the Leningrad scholars analyzed and published their dusty Oriental manuscripts. As we will see in the course of this book, this notion is misleading, since also manuscript editions were at times a highly political topic.

With these definitions in mind, the Orientalist appears as a researcher who devoted himself to the study of Oriental societies, whatever his specific subject. This definition is extremely large and includes almost everybody who has ever written something academic about the Orient. In this dissertation I narrow this field down significantly by introducing a geographical focus that at the same time also circumscribes the Orientalist discourse more precisely: I analyze only those Orientalists who were specialists in medieval Central Asian and Kazakhstani history, and who wrote on the history of the Kazakh SSR on the basis of written and archeological sources. This focus is legitimate from the perspective mentioned above with the words of Vera Tolz, namely that Oriental Studies in the USSR were an important arena, and agent, in the construction of Soviet “Muslim” nations in Central Asia.

## **Soviet Nationality Policies**

While the Soviet Union has long been regarded as the “prison of nations”, and Stalin as the “breaker of nations”, recent Western research has focused on the nation-building aspects of Soviet policies and the role of Lenin and Stalin in the process of creation of nations. Stalin’s characterization of Soviet culture as “national in form and socialist in content” is crucial for understanding Bolshevik nationality politics. Terry Martin, in his monograph *The Affirmative Action Empire*, emphasized that Soviet policies included a comprehensive program of promoting cadres from the minorities and of modernizing the republican nations which were regarded as economically, culturally and politically ‘backward’. According to

Martin, “the category of cultural backwardness was, like indigenoussness, related to the Bolshevik decolonization project, since Tsarist colonial oppression was said to have greatly exacerbated cultural backwardness. However, unlike indigenoussness, cultural backwardness was even more closely linked to the Bolshevik ideology of developmentalism. The Bolsheviks believed there was one path to progress and that various nations were located at different points along the path. The Bolsheviks aimed to dramatically accelerate the modernization of the former Russian Empire, which for them meant industrialization, urbanization, secularization, education, universal literacy, and territorial nationhood.”<sup>18</sup>

While Martin focused above all on minorities in Russia, several authors have done similar work on Central Asia. Francine Hirsch introduced the concept of “double assimilation”:<sup>19</sup> first, “the assimilation of diverse peoples into nationality categories and [second] the assimilation of nationally categorized groups into the Soviet state and society.”<sup>20</sup> This means that the Bolsheviks first imposed the European category of nation onto Central Asian peoples whose groups previously maintained a multitude of religious, tribal, geographical, and professional identities, and then integrated them into the family of Soviet peoples, as Francine Hirsch puts it, under the notion of ‘homo sovieticus’ (*sovetskii chelovek*). From a similar perspective Andrienne Edgar investigated the creation of the Turkmen nation out of numerous nomadic tribes; and Douglas Northrop looked at how the Bolsheviks used women to promote their influence on traditional society.<sup>21</sup> All of these recent studies paid attention to the fact that Soviet scholars (linguists, ethnographers, statisticians and others) were involved in Soviet nationality politics and participated in the process of nation building; however, as of yet there is no systematic study of the contribution of Soviet Orientalists (historians, philologists, archeologists) to the construction of national histories, and on the transformation of the image of Islam in Soviet Central Asia – and this is what my thesis attempts to outline for the case of Kazakhstan.

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<sup>18</sup> T. Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire. Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001), 126.

<sup>19</sup> F. Hirsch, *Empire of Nations. Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca, 2005); F. Hirsch, “Toward an Empire of Nations: Border-Making and the Formation of Soviet National Identities,” in: *The Russian Review* 59 (April 2000), 201-226.

<sup>20</sup> F. Hirsch, “Toward an Empire of Nations,” 214.

<sup>21</sup> A. Edgar, *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (Princeton, 2004); D.T. Northrop, *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia* (Ithaca, 2004).

## **The Kazakh Case**

The relation between academic Oriental studies and politics was of a mutual character: just as scholarship contributed to, and partly shaped, the ‘creation of nations,’ so also the Bolshevik nationality policies shaped Soviet and post-Soviet Oriental studies.

Soviet Orientalist research on Kazakhstan must therefore be seen within the context of the larger Soviet modernization program of what was to become Kazakhstan. From the late 1920s to the early 1940s the Bolsheviks implemented a series of economic, political and cultural projects which were aimed at overcoming the Kazakhs’ ‘backwardness’: the national delimitation in Central Asia and the establishment of five national republics (1924-1936); the building of the Turksib railroad (1926-1931), which finally connected Central Asia with production centers in Siberia; the campaign of sedentarization and collectivization (1927-1940); the struggle against religion in the whole country (1930s-1941); the latinization (1927) and cyrillization (1939) of the script in which the literary Kazakh language was written; and the production the national/ republican histories for each of the Central Asian republics (1941-1980s). These modernization actions reflect a clear ontological distinction between the progressive Europeans (Russians, Germans, Jews, etc.) on the one side, and the underdeveloped Oriental peoples, including the Kazakhs, on the other. In the 1920s, the latter had very little evidence of industry on their territory, which was an important marker for “progress”; rather, the Kazakhs mainly lived in the countryside, and were still caught up in what was called “vestiges of the past” (which, by contrast to neighboring Uzbekistan, was in the Kazakh case more associated with Shamanism than with Islam). The vast majority of the Kazakhs was illiterate. Accordingly, the very existence of a Kazakh nation was a quite sensitive question, even after the Kazakhs obtained their territorial and political body in the form of the Kazakh Autonomous Republic within the RSFSR, and then, in 1936, in the Kazakh SSR.

While the role of ethnography in these processes of nation building in Central Asia has already been studied by a number of scholars (though not with a focus on Kazakh-

stan),<sup>22</sup> the role of Oriental studies (in our definition above) has as of yet not received much attention. A first step was set by the Kazakh-born Dutch scholar Zifa Auezova, who gave an overview of the early Soviet attempts of writing Kazakh national history between 1920 and 1936. Auezova demonstrated that in a period where the Party line was much in flux, and where historiography was still continuing some conceptions of the time from before the Bolshevik Revolution, Russian and Kazakh scholars came up with several subsequent approaches to Kazakh history in order to compose the respective “ideologically correct” historical narrative with tragic results for some of these authors.<sup>23</sup>

## The Research Questions

In this complex field, there are several overall issues that this thesis tries to shed light upon. The first of these is the question of center-periphery relations. In contrast to Tashkent, Dushanbe and other republican capitals in the Soviet east, Alma-Ata never obtained its own, Soviet Kazakhstani Oriental Institute; such an institute emerged only in the 1990s, in the light of independent Kazakhstan a new search for identity. This means that Kazakhstani Orientology had a weaker and smaller structural fundament in the republic, being situated at universities and history institutes, and that it was more dependent on the transfer of knowledge and of cadres from the existing institutes in Moscow and, above all, Leningrad. An additional factor is the role of Tashkent in neighboring Uzbekistan, which already hosted the first Central Asian University where also Oriental studies were conducted. We will have to ask what kind of labor divisions emerged in this triangular relationship.

Related to this question of center-periphery relations is the question how local, Kazakhstani cadres in Orientology were produced, and under which political conditions they operated. How did the role and views of “Russian” scholars change after moving from a metropolis to a local centre, and vice versa? What was the role of representatives of differ-

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<sup>22</sup> F. Hirsch, “Toward an Empire of Nations”; D. DeWeese, “Survival Strategies: Reflections on the Notion of Religious ‘Survivals’ in Soviet Ethnographic Studies of Muslim Religious Life in Central Asia,” in: *Exploring the Edge of Empire: Socialist Era Anthropology in the Caucasus and Central Asia* (Halle, 2011), 35-58.

<sup>23</sup> Z. Auezova, “Conceiving a People’s History: the 1920-1936 Discourse on the Kazakh Past,” in Kemper & Conermann (eds.), *The Heritage of Soviet Oriental Studies*, 241-261.

ent nationalities in Kazakhstani Oriental studies? What was the role of national markers in the discourse of power in various centres and peripheries? Some scholars of indigenous origin even managed to be promoted to high-level academic positions in the central scientific institutions. How did this affect their vision of the Orient?

The second group of questions deals with the process of nation building itself. What was the role of academics in nation building, and how did this process influence the whole academic system? How did the regional and national discourses on Kazakhstani history develop under Soviet rule? Which parts of prerevolutionary discourses on Russia's Orient were continued in the Soviet epoch, and which were completely replaced?

The last, third, group of bit questions touches upon the history of Soviet Islam. What was the fate of the Islamic heritage in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and how did academic scholars shape the image of Islam in Kazakhstan? When many scholars of Muslim background entered the Academy of Sciences, did they accept the rules of the game imposed by the Bolsheviks, or did they have alternative ways for dealing with the system? This pool of questions has particular relevance for archeology, which dealt with the Islamic monuments of the past.

My overall aim is to identify the borders of autonomy in a field of scholarship that had its own hierarchies and tasks, and to analyze the diversity of knowledge-power in a complex field with several centres and peripheries. I try to identify the cases of politicization in scholarship with a number of very different case studies, ranging from historiography to archeology and Islamic studies. Furthermore, my goal is to identify the scholars who played the dominant roles in Soviet Oriental studies, and to see how they played the political game in order to increase their opportunities for research and promotion. As this will all be done on the basis of texts (and interviews with contemporary scholars some of whom participated in Soviet Oriental projects), my work is to a large degree a study of the discourse on Kazakhstan's identity. Next to center-periphery relations, as discussed above, I am above all interested in the dynamics between regional (Central Asian) and republican (Kazakhstani) approaches to the history of the country. For which political purposes did the Soviets finance some huge and impressive Oriental projects (on this term see below) on Kazakhstan, while others ended up in the drawer? Which national historical narratives were legitimate at which point in time, and which were not – and for what reason? Here one guiding thread through the whole of my thesis is the issue of nomadism and urban cul-

ture, against the Soviet campaigns to settle the Kazakhs and to give them a worthy history that by definition also needed to include city civilization – hence the title of my thesis “Settling the Past” which refers not only to the idea that the Soviets wanted to create an unambiguous, generalized image of the Kazakhs’ past, but more specifically that they tried to attribute settled city civilization to the Kazakhs. In this context, how did Soviet scholarship conceptualize the interplay of philological, historical and archeological work? And again: in how far was the development of national discourses linked to the activities of individual scholars – what was their agency? My material will provide no coherent answers to these big questions, but it will shed significant light on them and provide preliminary evidence from my case studies.

Moving from these general problems to the concrete case studies that will be elaborated upon in this book, I would now like to summarize a number of hypothesis that came up during my work, and that I believe I can substantiate with archival evidence.

### **Hypothesis I: Institutional Development of Oriental Studies**

Institutionally Oriental scholarship in the Kazakh SSR was introduced mainly by Leningrad specialists. My first hypothesis is that the group of Orientalists who worked in Kazakhstan was de facto a branch of Leningrad classical Oriental studies and archeology.

Leningrad and Moscow were the main centres of Soviet Oriental Studies. All the main institutions in the framework of the USSR Academy of Sciences were located there. Tashkent had the role of a local regional metropolis of Oriental studies and was an important educational centre for indigenous cadres from Central Asian republics. However, before the 1950s the majority of research projects dealing with Central Asia were carried out in Leningrad. In the post-war period we observe the geographical expansion of Orientalology into the republics; while Kazakhstan did not get an own Oriental Institute, it still benefited from this shift to the republics through the establishment of research teams in Alma-Ata at the Institute of History, Archeology and Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences of the Kazakh SSR (IIAE ANKazSSR) and at the university. Representatives from the centres, foremost Leningrad scientific institutions, played a decisive role in this process, and the connections with Leningrad remained vital for the whole Soviet period. The education

of local cadres was guaranteed through the privileged position of students from the southern republics at major universities in Moscow and Leningrad, through short-term studies (or internships, ranging from several months to several years) at the central research institutions under the supervision of well-known specialists, and also through regular consultations and the collaboration in all-Soviet academic conferences. As a result, the first generation of Alma-Ata-based scholars received their education before the 1950s in Moscow, Leningrad and Tashkent or under the supervision of metropolitan scholars. The Kazakhstani scholars of various nationalities who studied in Leningrad returned with the methodological approaches characteristic for the Leningrad school of classical Oriental studies and Oriental archeology.

As mentioned above, one of the main characteristics of Soviet Oriental studies in Kazakhstan was the absence of an institution with a corresponding name. Yet all through the Soviet era there were several attempts to set up a special sector of Oriental studies in the framework of the Institute of History, Archeology and Ethnography in Alma-Ata. However, they all failed, and the major group of Orientalists working in Kazakhstan was located at the sectors of archeology and history of pre-revolutionary Kazakhstan in the Institute of History, Archeology and Ethnography.

## **Hypothesis II: Settling the Past in Kazakhstan**

Soviet studies on medieval Kazakhstan dealt primarily with issues of ethnogenesis, statehood, and economic relations. The territory of present-day Kazakhstan, situated in the very heart of Eurasia, has always been an area of intense interaction between nomadic and settled populations. The Silk Road went through the Kazakh Steppe, and numerous empires were created and destroyed in this vast territory. In tenth century the Qarakhanid rulers Satūq Boghrā Khan (920-955) and his son Mūsā (956-958) converted to Islam, and approximately at that time Islam started to spread in the Steppe. The Mongol invasion of the thirteenth century integrated this region into a new world empire, and since that time up to the Russian conquest descendants of Chingiz Khan monopolized the right of power. According to Steppe tradition only the Chingizids possessed the charisma and legitimacy for rule. The Kazakh Khanate, supposedly the first Kazakh state, emerged out of post-Mongol states in the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Essential in this process were the wars over the cities of

the middle Syr-Daria valley which the Kazakh khans waged, in the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, against the Uzbek dynasties in what is now Uzbekistan. With its oasis towns and settlements, this region – present-day Southern Kazakhstan – played a crucial role as economic and political centres.

Since the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Muscovy, and then the Russian Empire incorporated more and more large territories with significant non-Russian populations. By comparison to the colonial expansion of other European empires, the Russian Empire lacked a clear geographical border between the supposed metropolis and colonies. The Kazakh tribes were gradually included (some peacefully, others by force) into the Russian Empire since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and became a part of ‘Russia’s own Orient’.<sup>24</sup> However, due to the presumably nomadic character of its population, this region remained very different from the other “Oriental” areas of the Russian Empire, especially the Volga-Urals and the area inhabited by Siberian Muslims, and also differed from the Caucasus and Transoxiana.

Russia has a long tradition of Oriental scholarship which was always stimulated by the colonial and political context. The main feature of the pre-revolutionary Russian perception of the Kazakhs was the vision of the local population as exclusively nomadic. For most Russian observers this had negative connotations, for some others it did not per se; but in general, pastoralism was regarded as inferior to sedentary agriculture on the ladder of civilizations.<sup>25</sup> The mobility of the nomads was associated with chaos, absence of state institutions and lack of productivity. The nomadic way of life was seen as something constant and predetermined. As Ian Campbell neatly put it, in the Russians’ view “the essential nature of the steppe was unchanging.”<sup>26</sup> During Tsarist times the Kazakhs were not associated with urban life.

In the research literature there is indeed a broad consensus that pre-Soviet Kazakh identity was based on the nomadic way of life and on the common ancestry of tribes.<sup>27</sup> And

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<sup>24</sup> V. Tolz, *Russia’s Own Orient*, 10.

<sup>25</sup> O.E. Sukhikh, *Obraz kazakha-kochevnika v russkoi obshchestvenno-politicheskoi mysli v kontse XVIII – pervoi polovine XIX veka*. PhD Thesis (Omsk, 2007), 47-57.

<sup>26</sup> I.W. Campbell, “Settlement Promoted, Settlement Contested: the Shcherbina Expedition of 1896-1903,” *Central Asian Survey* 30: 3-4 (2011), 425.

<sup>27</sup> M. Khodorkovsky, *Russia’s Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500-1800* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 2002), 12; Y. Malikov, “The Kenesary Kasymov Rebellion (1837-1847): A National-Liberation Movement or ‘a Protest of Restoration’?,” in: *Nationalities Papers* 33:4, 576-578; M.B. Olcott,

already since the promulgation of the *Regulations on Siberian Kirgiz* (1822) the Tsarist authorities articulated the idea that the Kazakh nomads should gradually settle down and accept “Russian imperial culture and values.”<sup>28</sup> Thus already for the Russian colonial administration sedentarization was a means for ‘civilizing’ peoples of the Empire.<sup>29</sup> Russian administrative efforts at gradual sedentarization then led to the Soviet settlement campaigns that interrupted the long tradition of Kazakh nomadism. For Kazakhstan, it had most terrible consequences; the Soviet collectivization of rural economies in the late 1920s and early 1930s caused such a starvation that approximately a third of the Kazakhs either perished or moved out of the country.<sup>30</sup>

My hypothesis is that in the Soviet period, historians struggled with this bi-polar framework of ‘nomads vs. farmers’; and there were various attempts to come to a more complex picture in which the population of the Kazakh Steppe practiced, in the medieval period, various forms of economy. The concept that also the Kazakhs possessed an urban culture, and statehood linked to towns, became central elements in the academic production on the Kazakh past. In the 1970s-80s Moscow archeologists suggested that Central Asian history was much more colorful than the division into two forms of socio-economic life would make us think: there were no ‘pure’ nomads but a wide range of economic relations between ‘farmers’ and ‘nomads’. Since the 1950s, Kazakh national scholars even regarded urban culture as the major part of the national heritage. This critique of the dichotomy of sedentary vs. nomadic civilizations lies in the core of my research, because I am trying to reveal the instruments and ideas by which academic sciences changed the image of a people. Oriental studies in Kazakhstan contributed much to the national narrative through the promotion of the idea that the Kazakhs were also city-dwellers.

### **Hypothesis III: Regional History next to National Approaches**

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*The Kazakhs*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Stanford, Calif., 1995), 18; R.G. Suny, “Constructing Primordialism: Old Histories for New Nations,” in: *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 73, no. 4 (Dec., 2001), 879.

<sup>28</sup> V. Martin, *Law and Custom in the Steppe: The Kazakhs of the Middle Horde and Russian Colonialism in the Nineteenth Century* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2001), 36-37.

<sup>29</sup> A.V. Remnev, “Kolonial’nost’, postkolonial’nost’ i “istoricheskaia politika” v sovremennom Kazakhstane,” in: *Ab Imperio* 1/ 2011, 169-205.

<sup>30</sup> I. Ohayon, *La Sédentarisation des Kazakhs dans l’URSS de Staline, Collectivisation et Changement Social (1928-1945)* (Paris, 2006), 174-175.

One can distinguish two spatial approaches in Tsarist and Soviet traditions of studying Central Asia. The first approach is a regional one, one that regards Central Asia as a whole. In Tsarist times, this region comprised the administrative unit called Steppe region (*Stepnoi Krai*), largely coinciding with the territory of modern Kazakhstan, plus Turkestan (Transoxiana or Western Turkestan, Eastern Turkestan, and Afghan Turkestan, the latter two for most of the time beyond the borders of the Russian colonial state). Transoxiana was the main object of interest for Russian Oriental studies, and thus Turkestan studies (*turkestanovedenie*) or Central Asian history (*istoriia Srednei Azii*) meant above all this part of the overall region. The founding father of this regional view was the eminent Russian (of Baltic German origin) Orientalist of broadest profile, Vasili V. Bartol'd (1869-1930), whose influence on the discipline was and still is tremendous. Soviet power, however, decided to introduce modernization through the creation of individual nations, and gave up the regional approach: the common Central Asian history was cut into national pieces. However, the regional perspective still continued for a while, and ran parallel to the "republican" approach. This ended in the 1930s, when, after national delimitation and the construction of national cultures, it became almost impossible to study the history from a regional point of view. Some scholars of Bartol'd's school accepted the new rules, and participated in state-sponsored campaigns to produce national historiographies; others, like Aleksandr A. Semenov, did not give up their regional perspective.

My contention that the regional perspective did not simply vanish from the field is supported by the finding, not acknowledged in Western scholarship up to this day, that the regional approach returned into academic life in the 1970s. Again, this seems to have been the result of a change in the party line; and this is my third hypothesis. I argue that the first return of the regional approach occurred already right after the Stalin's death, with the rehabilitation of several 'bourgeois' Orientalists: since the late 1950s, the major works of several prominent pre-revolutionary and early Soviet Orientalists were republished in Moscow and Leningrad, and widely disseminated all over the Soviet Union. The majority of these authors (like the Arabist Krachkovskii and the Iranist Bertel's) in fact shared Bartol'd's regional view on Central Asian history. In the 1970s, the Academy of Sciences (obviously on state demand) even went a significant step further and initiated a new program of writing regional histories, in which authors from various republics were engaged to pro-

duce a common history. My suggestion is that this return of regionalism was very much an attempt of the center to counter the strength of nationalisms, not only in the Baltic states and the Caucasus (the other big regions that were covered) but also in Central Asia, where the Party bosses of the republics gradually escaped Moscow's control.<sup>31</sup> As we will see, this program failed: the borders that the USSR and its scholars had set up between the newly created nations were by then already too strong to be incorporated, again by Orientalists, into a single historical narrative.

Here my research contributes to the broader discussion of the role of nationalism in the fall of the Soviet Union. I argue that already in the 1970s Moscow could not impose its decisions upon national elites and intelligentsias of Central Asia.

#### **Hypothesis IV: Oriental Projects as a Conceptual Framework**

The instruments of these policies towards academia were embodied in institutions, discourses, and in the everyday management of Soviet scholarship; an analysis of these instruments demonstrates the full extent of politicization in Oriental studies. In order to conceptualize these tools I would like to introduce here the term 'Oriental projects'.<sup>32</sup>

"Oriental projects" were important scholarly research programs in Soviet Oriental studies, of various size, duration, and contents. Usually they started with a proposal to the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR or the respective institutions on republican level; these proposals were written by respected scholars in the field, and one can assume that they were submitted after preliminary discussions with the Academy, or even on higher demand.<sup>33</sup> The projects were carried out by big collectives of specialists in the

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<sup>31</sup> M. R. Beissinger, *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State* (Cambridge, 2002).

<sup>32</sup> This concept was inspired by the notion of 'Orientalist projects' used by Edward Said, however in a completely different context – to denote the Western military campaigns in Oriental countries (more precisely – Napoleon's wars in the Near East). See: E. Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1978), 76. The concept of Oriental projects as I understand it is also applicable for Soviet ethnography, which was "tasked with several projects that were intended directly to contribute to the state program of cultural transformation, eradicating 'harmful' cultural phenomena and fostering progressive socialist culture" (J. Schoeberlein, "Heroes of Theory: Central Asian Islam in Post-War Soviet Ethnography," in: F. Mühlfried, S. Sokolovskii (eds.), *Exploring the Edge of Empire. Soviet Era Anthropology in the Caucasus and Central Asia* (Münster, 2011), 61).

<sup>33</sup> On the structure of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, see: A. Vucinich, *The Soviet Academy of Sciences* (Stanford, 1956), 21-30.

field and they were of interdisciplinary nature. Oriental projects united scholars of different disciplinary backgrounds from the same institution, and often they comprised representatives of several institutions from the centre and the periphery. The initial proposals – the ones that have been documented – usually included the substantiation of the project’s necessity; here it was emphasized that this or that individual project was not merely an academic enterprise but also essential for political reasons. These project proposals thus give striking evidence of the political side of Soviet Oriental scholarship, and of the fact that the project leaders were well aware of this, and used it for their purposes. In addition, these proposals usually provided information on the history of previous studies, included a working plan and a budget calculation, which sometimes reached impressive sums. I call these projects ‘Oriental’ because several of these huge projects had the translation and edition of Arabic, Persian, and Turkic manuscripts as their goal, thus the core business of classical Orientology in our definition. Sometimes a project proposal focused not on one single subject region but on several (e.g. when sources on one or several republics were to be published, over a few years); in such cases the project could turn into a prolonged scientific program. The Oriental projects could also be long scientific campaigns — as for example in the case of the Soviet archeological excavations in Khwarezm (Uzbek SSR) and in the Otrar Oasis (Kazakh SSR). However, not all Oriental projects have been fully documented. Sometimes all we found in the archives is a draft without its further development, whereas in other cases we have a complete history of the project from its first stages to the final publication of the project results. In these cases it is possible to compare the different “political narratives” and to link these to the individual research topics.

Oriental projects are a perfect case for studying two of the major characteristic features of academic Soviet Oriental studies: their collective mode (work in huge “brigades”) and their central planning. If previously scientific enterprises by the Russian Academy of Sciences were mainly the result of individual initiatives (except, probably, for the major geographical explorations, such as the Great Northern Expedition of 1733-43), starting in the 1930s the Soviet system forced scholars to work in huge scientific collectives, on long-term projects with a clearly defined time-schedule, and with openly expressed political goals. Important is that research jobs were assigned, not freely developed by the individual scholar; and the huge Oriental projects were directed by individual leaders of these groups (mostly those who also wrote the proposals, and defined the contents) who then also re-

ported regularly to the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences; in case the project failed, it was them who had to take the responsibility. These leaders quite often developed into ‘monopolizers’ of science, since once a project director managed to establish a link with the Academy and Party leadership, he obtained much freedom to pursue his favorite theories, and to develop his ambitions. Prime examples here would be scholars like the well-known linguist and Orientalist Nikolai Ia. Marr (1865-1934), archeologist Sergei P. Tolstov (1907-1976), and the Iranist Evgenii E. Bertel’s (1890-1957). As we will see on the book, they directed huge projects over many years or decades, and thereby shaped the development of Soviet Oriental studies.

My final, fourth, hypothesis is therefore that the development of Soviet Oriental scholarship on Kazakhstan can be conceptualized in the form of ‘scientific campaigns’ or ‘projects’, in the definition introduced above. “Oriental projects” could both limit and increase the agency of the participants; and they were important links between the center and Kazakhstan.

## **Individual Projects**

This thesis studies three groups of Oriental projects: philological, archeological, and meta-historical projects. The individual projects are often closely interwoven, which allows us to see not only the breaks caused by political circumstances but also the long lines of continuities in academic approaches, especially with regard to the competition between national and regional views (see Appendix 4 “Discourse Development”). These two competing approaches were employed in various Oriental projects, irrespective of the disciplines involved. ‘Meta-historical narratives’ are multi-volume history works that cover the whole history of the territory of an individual Soviet republic, since time immemorial.

In our case studies we will look at the following Oriental projects and campaigns:

1. *Materials on the History of Uzbek, Tajik, and Turkmen Soviet Republics, first volume: The Trade with the Moscow State and the International Status of Central Asia in the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> Centuries.*

1932. Leningrad Orientalists. Collection of sources translated into Russian.

2. *Materials on the History of the Turkmens and Turkmenia.*  
1934-1939. Leningrad Orientalists. Collection of sources translated into Russian.
3. *Materials on the History of the Karakalpaks.*  
1935. Leningrad Orientalists. Collection of articles.
4. *The History of Irrigation in Central Asia.*  
1935-36. Uzbekistani Orientalists. Search, edition and translation of sources.
5. Rashīd ad-Dīn. *Jāmi‘ at-tavārīkh [The Collection of Histories/ The World History]*.  
1936-1965. Leningrad Orientalists. Translation and a critical edition of a chronicle.
6. *Arabic, Persian, and Turkic Authors about the History of the Kirgiz and Kirgizstan in the 9<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> Centuries*  
1940-1941 (?). Leningrad Orientalists. Translation of sources. The project failed.
7. *Collection of Materials Connected to the History of the Golden Horde, vol. 2: Extracts from Persian Sources Collected by V.G. Tizengauzen and Elaborated by A.A. Romaskevich and S.L. Volin.*  
1941. Leningrad Orientalists. Translation and edition of sources.
8. *History of the Kazakh SSR.*  
1943-1980. Kazakh, Moscow and Leningrad authors. An inter-disciplinary meta-history of a national republic.
9. *Materials on the History of the Kirgiz and Kirgizstan.*  
1954-1957. ‘The Kirgiz group’ of Leningrad Orientalists. Translation of sources.
10. *Materials on the History of the Kazakh Khanates.*  
1955-1969. Kazakh and Leningrad Orientalists. Translation of sources.
11. [Rehabilitation of ‘Bourgeois’ Orientalists].  
1957-1980s. Leningrad Orientalists. Re-edition of Russian Orientalist classics.
12. Chokan Valikhanov. *Collected Works.*  
1960s-1980s. Kazakh Orientalists. Translation and edition of works.
13. The Otrar Campaign.

1960s-1980s. Kazakh archeologists. Urban studies.

14. The *Shajara* Project.

1970-1980. Kazakh historians. Search and edition of Kazakh tribal genealogies.

15. The Yasawī Shrine.

1974-1980s. Kazakh specialists. Restoration of the shrine and complex studies of the building

16. Regional Histories.

1974-1980s. Specialists all over the Union. Regional meta-histories. Project failed.

## Chapters

The architecture of my dissertation is predetermined by the sub-disciplines of Soviet Oriental studies: philology, history and archeology.

In the **first chapter** I challenge the perception that classical philological Orientology is non-political. This will be done by an investigation of how, in the context of the national delimitation of Central Asia, medieval Islamic historiographies with regional perspectives were cut into national pieces. I argue that classical Oriental studies obtained a monopoly on the study of the Islamic heritage; furthermore, we will see that representatives of the “Islamic religious personnel” (that is, former imams and ‘ulama’) joined the institutional framework of Soviet scholarship, not to the least degree by donating their huge manuscript collections to the Soviet academic libraries. One of the main features of that generation of “Islamic Orientalists” was that they did not write and publish much, preferring instead to engage themselves in the unspectacular and long-term business of cataloging manuscripts, translating historical texts into Russian, and lecturing.

Classical Orientology was concentrated in Leningrad and Tashkent where the largest collections of Islamic manuscripts were located, and where the collectives of well-trained philologists and historians were employed. In this first chapter I put special emphasis on

the role of the collective form of scholarly work which was at the core of Oriental projects management. Smaller groups of classical Orientalists started to appear in other places, including in Alma-Ata, only after WWII.

The **second chapter** is devoted to the long process of writing national histories, and to the interaction of regional and national approaches. I demonstrate how prerevolutionary concepts of Kazakh history were continued by local authors well into the mid-1930s, when they were replaced by new approaches. The latter included a heavy infusion of Marxist ideology, the form of collective work, dependence on the current Party line, a national (republican) orientation and the attempt to depict the medieval Kazakhs as city-dwellers. We will encounter heated debates over the key concepts of national histories related to nomadic statehood, the sequence of socioeconomic formations, the re-evaluation of the Russian conquest, and national movements. I also argue that even though the national perspective of history writing became dominant in Soviet historical scholarship since the 1930s, the regional approach remained in existence and was even rehabilitated in the 1970s, when forces in the Communist Party decided to restructure historical narratives in a regional way.

The practical difficulties in the establishment of Kazakhstani Oriental studies and the success of a group of young scholars in Alma-Ata are addressed in the **third chapter**. I highlight that senior scholars who participated in those efforts, and whom I interviewed in St. Petersburg, Moscow, on the one hand, and in Almaty, on the other, come to very different evaluations about the Soviet academic experience. I use the interviews and the archival materials to elucidate how two successful administrators – Nusupbekov and Dakhshleiger – played a tandem in the establishment and management of philological and archeological studies in the Kazakh SSR. The two managed to build up a very strong collective of highly qualified scholars who were able to implement a series of important projects. However, within this collective people had very different characters. Some scholars fully accepted the system and played a significant role in it, while others tried to implement their own agenda (for example, writing a parallel national history on the basis of genealogies) but usually failed in doing so. Significantly, the roles and functions in the team were distributed not in accordance with national or geographical criteria, but rather depending on a person's attitudes towards ideological questions, on personal relations, and on the ability to work in the existing framework.

The final **fourth chapter** deals with the gradual ‘sedentarization of the past’ by means of Soviet Oriental archeology in Kazakhstan. Archeological research followed the model of how historical and philological work was organized in the Soviet Union. Decades-long Oriental project on edition of an individual medieval text (Rashīd ad-Dīn is the best example) is quite comparable to stationary works on a particular archeological site: scholars worked collectively, according to the five-year plan and with a goal to bring findings to meta-narrative, where historical evidence will be conceptualized in national terms. I also argue that the Kazakh case followed the general patterns of Soviet Central Asian archeology: the academic approaches and institutional framework were quite similar in all republics. Taking the Otrar campaign as an example, I demonstrate how archeology was closely tied with Oriental studies: the archeologists needed access to the information contained in medieval chronicles in Oriental languages; as they usually did not possess the necessary linguistic knowledge they depended on the collaboration with philologists. Classical Orientology thus provided the historical context for archeological reconstructions. The archeological research of ancient cities was decisive for changing the general view on the Kazakhs as an exclusively nomadic people. Archeologists proved that in Southern Kazakhstan there were many cities, and that the Kazakhs possessed a tradition of high urban culture. I also address the issue of the fate of Islamic architecture under the Soviet regime: how and why the Yasawī shrine was used in politics. Each chapter encompasses a micro-analysis of views of particular authors, of the implementation of the scientific initiatives, and of the creation of new institutions.

### **Sources: Archival Documentation and Oral History**

All of my conclusions are primarily based on the rich files of the Archive of the Ministry of Sciences of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Ob’edenennyi vedomstvennyi arkhiv komiteta nauki ministerstva nauki Respubliki Kazakhstan), the Institute of Archeology of the National Academy of Sciences, and the Central State Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan, all in Almaty; the Archive of Orientalists of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, St. Petersburg Branch of the Archive of Russian Academy of Sciences; the State Hermitage; and the Scientific Archive of the Institute of History of Material Culture of the Russian Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg. The sources that I was able to find there are typed or

handwritten documents in Russian as well as in several Turkic (including Kazakh) languages and in English. Almost all of these texts are institutional documentations that cast light on the inner structure of the respective academic unit and on the day-to-day work of its employees, often also containing their private scientific files. These documents consist of five-year plans of the given organization, of project drafts, of internal and external correspondence, of party orders, of autobiographical accounts by employees, of discussion protocols on different topics, of reports on finished or closed projects, of unpublished research files (articles, monographs, notebooks, translated or typed texts of manuscripts) and of other materials.

In order to collect sources I spent three months in Almaty in summer 2010 and regularly visited St. Petersburg between 2009 and 2011. To write the history of Oriental archeology in Kazakhstan I participated in the Turkestan Archeological Expedition (Southern Kazakhstan), under the leadership of Dr. Erbulat A. Smagulov, in 2009 and 2010. After studying archival sources and performing field work. I used to test my preliminary results by discussing them in interviews with St. Petersburg and Almaty Orientalists. I benefitted from the opportunity to communicate with several participants — some of whom have now already passed away — of the Oriental projects analyzed here. One can argue that interviews as a source have a shortcoming: informants will give a tendentious picture and will try to downplay sensitive issues. However, the data from the interviews could often be compared with archival documents and published (auto-)biographical sources.<sup>34</sup> Thus I went from documentation to interviews and then back from interviews to documents. In the interviewing process I have been relying on some classical theoretical works on oral history<sup>35</sup> and on my own experience of ethnographic work since 2005. The narratives that I col-

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<sup>34</sup> G.F. Blagova, “A.N. Samoilovich kak uchenyi-tiurkolog – lingvist, issledovatel’ istorii sredneaziatsko-tiurkskikh literatur i istorii literaturnykh iazykov,” in: A.N. Samoilovich, *Tiurkskoe iazykoznanie. Filologiya. Runika* (Moscow, 2005), 13-50; A.N. Boldyrev, *Osadnaia zapis’ (blokadnyi dnevnik)* (St. Petersburg, 1998); B.S. Kaganovich, *Sergei Fedorovich Ol’denburg: Opyt biografii* (St. Petersburg, 2006); I.Iu. Krachkovskii, “Ispytanie vremenem. Mysli k 45-letiiu nauchnoi raboty”, ed. by A.A. Dolinina, in: *Peterburgskoe vostokovedenie* 8 (St. Petersburg, 1996), 564-596; I.Iu. Krachkovskii, *Nad arabskimi rukopisiami. Listki vospominanii o knigakh i liudiakh* (Moscow, 1941); A.A. Dolinina, *Nevol’nik dolga* (St. Petersburg, 1994); Iu.A. Petrosian, *Vstrechi i rasstavaniia: zapiski vostokoveda* (St. Petersburg, 2002); N. Poppe, *Reminiscences*, ed. H.G. Schwarz (Western Washington, 1983).

<sup>35</sup> S. Counce, *Oral History and the Local Historian* (London, New York, 1994); P. Thompson, *The Voice of the Past. Oral History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Oxford, New York, 1988); E. Tonkin, *Narrating Our Pasts: The Social Construction of Oral History* (Cambridge, 1992); V.R. Yow, *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Lanham, New York, Toronto, Plymouth, UK, 2005).

lected from Orientalists are personal in style and reflect their present-day view on the events that happened some thirty or even sixty years ago. These perceptions in hindsight are heavily influenced by the dissolution of the country in which they spent the main part of their lives, and also by the present-day status of the scholar in post-Soviet societies. For example, the moving of Vladimir Nastich and Tursun Sultanov from Almaty to central scientific institutions in Moscow and St. Petersburg in the 1970s and 1980s determined their respective evaluation of the Soviet experience. Some of the Kazakh scholars with whom I conducted interviews also subjected Soviet Oriental studies to a critique from national positions. In their interpretation, this or that big initiative in Kazakh history writing failed mainly because of the pressure of the administrative regime. I also tried to catch all nuances by comparing the official documentation from the centres and the peripheries. Initially I planned to edit a collection of interviews with the elder generation of Russian Orientalists, but this idea did not find their support; a circumstance that supports my impression that my interview partners were completely honest and open during our conversations, without vanity.<sup>36</sup> Unfortunately I came too late to conduct interviews with Vadim M. Masson (1929-2010), a leading archeologist of Central Asia, and Turkologist Iurii A. Petrosian (1929-2011), both renowned and competent Leningrad scholars.

When preparing interviews I had to decide whom to interview. Of course, I was above all interested in the memoirs of those colleagues who themselves participated in Oriental projects and who worked at the respective scientific institutions. Second, I tried to keep a balance between representatives of the St Petersburg academic circles and those in Almaty. Finally, I was lucky enough to talk to several relatives of those Orientalists who have already passed away, which was helpful for learning about their personal contacts, scientific trips, and for identifying their relations with colleagues and the administration of their institutes. All interviews were conducted in the Russian language and dealt in the first place with the career of each conversation partner, with his or her involvement.

## **Methods: Discourse, Network, and Institutions**

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<sup>36</sup> The publication of an interview with archeologist B.A. Litvinskii about his academic career in the Tajik SSR (B. Litvinskii, "My podarili tadjikskomu narodu pervuiu polnotsennuiu istoriiu," URL: <http://www.fergananews.com/article.php?id=6098> [date of publication: 17.03.2009; consulted on 20.04.2012]) led to a great scandal. See his critiques from the Tajik side: A. Tursun, "'Sbros' obuzu korysti, tshcheslaviia gnet..." Po povodu odnogo akademicheskogo skandala provintsial'noi zakvaski," in: *Iran-name* 1 (2009), 172-225; K. Rustam, "Pochemu gospodin Litvinskii lzhet?," in: *Iran-name* 1 (2009), 271-275.

This huge corpus of sources was approached by a combination of discourse, network, and institutional analysis, a combined perspective that was first formulated by a team of scholars at Bochum University in the late 1990s and early 2000s.<sup>37</sup> Private letters, autobiographies and memoirs map the geography of contacts of Soviet Orientalists all over the Union, as well as abroad. The sources suggest that informal contacts between individuals were indeed more important than the institutional ties,<sup>38</sup> even though almost all Orientalists in question were employed at the USSR Academy of Sciences. Network analysis is aimed to study relations between persons and social groups and to reveal the links of individual actors to bigger social structures.<sup>39</sup> The main question here is the problem of center-periphery relations: what were the relations between the scientific centers in Moscow/Leningrad (as well as between the two of them) and local republican groups of scholars? Which ties prevailed: horizontal ties between the colleagues from different republics, or vertical links between the central and republican centers? Was there a hierarchy of centres and peripheries in Central Asia, and inside of Kazakhstan? These questions are important for the characterization of Kazakh Orientology. In view of the Soviet system of strong institutionalization, network analysis should be combined with studying the dynamic process of institution building. As we shall see, the whole history of Kazakh Orientology consists of the endless establishment, reform, change and abolishing of various academic institutions which dealt with the Orient. Finally, in this dissertation I pay much attention not only to scientific programs and individual projects but also to a wide range of scholars with their dynamic views, who shaped the Soviet academic discourses on the Kazakh past. I reconstruct these discourses on the basis of the published and unpublished materials. To

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<sup>37</sup> M. Kemper, *Herrschaft, Recht und Islam in Daghestan. Von der Khanaten und Gemeindebünden zum žihād-Staat* (Wiesbaden, 2005); M. Kemper, *Sufis und Gelehrte in Tatarien und Baschkirien: Der islamische Diskurs unter russischer Herrschaft* (Berlin, 1998); A. von Kügelgen, *Die Legitimierung der mittelasiatischen Mangitendynastie in den Werken ihrer Historiker (18.-19. Jh.)* (Stuttgart, Beirut, 2002); S. Reichmuth, *The World of Murtaḍa al-Zabīdī (1732-91): Life, Networks and Writings* (London, 2009) et al.

<sup>38</sup> M. Emirbayer, J. Goodwin, "Network Analysis, Culture and the Problem of Agency," *American Journal of Sociology* 99:6 (1994), 1411-1454.

<sup>39</sup> M. Kemper, *Herrschaft, Recht und Islam*, 55; Classical works of network analysis: J. Clyde Mitchell (ed.), *Social Networks in Urban Situations. Analyses of Personal Relationships in Central African Towns* (Manchester, 1969); J. Boissevain, J. Clyde Mitchell (eds.), *Network Analysis: Studies in Human Interaction* (The Hague, Paris, 1973).

visualize all these dynamic changes and to accent the role of individual players I drew several schemes that were placed in the attachment.