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The Focus

Memory and commemoration in Central Asia

Introduction | 29-31

Heritage sites and commemorative practices have become visual protagonists of a nationalist rhetoric in modern Central Asia. Central Asia is defined as the region encompassing the former-Soviet republics, in addition to Xinjiang, Afghanistan and Mongolia. This special issue analyses cultural memory practices used by former and current Central Asian elites as a tool for boosting ethno-nationalism.



32-33

Zifa Auezova discusses the painful legacy of the 1916 Revolt in Turkestan and the Steppe Regions of the Russian Empire, based on the 1928 novel *Qily Zaman* (The Time of Ordeal), written by the Kazakh author Mukhtar Auevov.

34-36

Artemy Kalinovsky shows how the creation of the Tajik national opera and ballet was a symbolic centrepiece of the Soviet policies in the 1930s. By discussing the debates on the proper cultural forms for the new republics, and outlining the musical and literary sources for the new operas, Kalinovsky traces the tensions and contradictions of the Soviet experiment in Tajikistan.

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Gabrielle van den Berg draws our attention to the Ismaili community of Badakhshan. The religious poetry *maddoh* as a devotional practice and a form of religious education remained entirely outside the process of 'theatricalization'. After the Civil war (1992-1997), *maddohkhoni* acquired a new public dimension with stage performances and local television broadcasts.

38-39

Nienke van der Heide describes how the history of the Manas epic has been used by political elites in Kyrgyzstan. The mythical forefather Manas and his companions are remembered as true ancestors who represent the pride of the present Kyrgyz nation.

40-41

Elena Paskaleva explores how the contemporary Uzbek state legitimizes its policies by 'imitating' the craftsmanship of the Timurid period, reviving the distinct Timurid visual morphology and visions of kingship.

42-43

Orhon Myadar illustrates how Chinggis Khan has been appropriated as a symbolic narrative of the new political ideology in Mongolia. His figure has been used as the foremost representation of Mongolian national identity through the state's selective interpretation of history.

44-45

Tomás Skinner describes the recent processes of spatial cleansing and gentrification in Kashgar, the westernmost city of China and an important hub along the Silk Road. Focussing on the city's urban heritage, he showcases the importance of the Silk Road as the most significant economic, political and cultural exchange network between the Orient and the West.