



**Kokut Erturk, ed.** *Rethinking Central Asia: Non-Eurocentric Studies in History, Social-Structure and Identity.* Cornell: Ithaca Press, 1999. vi + 202 pp. \$49.50 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-86372-240-0.



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## **Patriarchy's Historical Vicissitudes**

### Patriarchy's Historical Vicissitudes

The editor of this volume, Korkut Erturk, in a lucid and promising introduction, writes that the authors of the collection's articles offer an alternative to "the Eurocentric interpretation of Central Asia." The articles address "how Central Asia fits into world history and what are its specificity, social structure and organization," as well as "the questions of identity, the history of political self-articulation, and vicissitudes of patriarchy in the history of the region" (p. 3). These are lofty promises, which are only partially fulfilled. Many of the articles examine broad themes that reach toward some coherence in the social history of Central Asia, often in comparison with the Ottoman Empire. Because this review is for H-Gender-MidEast, I will draw attention to one chapter that focuses on women's history and, concerning other chapters, will note some places where a gendered analysis might have been productive.

The volume opens with a selection from Andre Gunder Frank's *Re-Orient*.<sup>[1]</sup> This chapter, like Gunder Frank's larger work, is a synthesis of world economic history in the early modern period, one that challenges un-

derstandings based on analysis of European trends rather than Asian trends. Gunder Frank asserts that China and India remained the economic powers of the world until the nineteenth century, and that European long-distance trade was peripheral even after the florescence of European maritime trade. The first half of this chapter is a very cursory overview of a thesis articulated with greater clarity in Gunder Frank's monograph and it leaves the reader wondering what evidence there is for so many sweeping assertions. The second half of the chapter provides a refutation of arguments about the decline of Central Asian caravan trade in the early modern period. The author points out that expansion of maritime trade did not necessitate the decline of caravan routes, as is often assumed, but rather complemented ongoing caravan trade. He also examines the implications of rising state power in early modern Russia, and the shift in direction and location of Asian trade routes.

Broad themes of state and societal formation emerge in Isenbike Togan's "Patterns of Legitimization of Rule in the History of the Turks." Togan's article, one of two in this collection, tries to establish a general periodiza-

tion for the history of “the Turks,” both Central Asian and Anatolian, by examining the interaction of trade patterns and political formation, and linking ruptures in patterns of redistribution to larger trends in Asian history. Togan compares the typically redistributive and non-interventionist economies of Central Asian nomadic societies with the interventionist approach of the sendentary Ottoman and Chinese Empires. She tries to build a new periodization scheme for the discussion of state and trade, one that seems to turn on the great men and large state projects used to establish periods in much of world history, without the promised attention to trade cycles or non-political features. In the section on political legitimization, the comparisons between Central Asian nomadic confederations and the Ottoman Empire are forced, and carried out at a high level of generalization. The arguments of this article are, however, suggestive of new directions for research and analysis.

Togan follows one of those directions in “In Search of an Approach to the History of Women in Central Asia”. Again comparing widely among pre-modern Turkic societies, she argues that a history of women that pays attention to change over time should examine the periodic reinforcement of patriarchy. Thus, a strengthening of gender hierarchies may be correlated to trends in centralization of the state. Togan notes, however, that age hierarchy within homosocial units is sometimes more significant than gender hierarchy, and she explores these overlapping forms of authority in Turkic societies. She suggests that when there was decentralization of the state, age hierarchy became more significant: “As women did not pose a threat to the non-centralized state authority they were able to acquire greater authority in their microcosms in comparison with women in centralized state structures” (p. 172). As evidence, Togan first explores the increased use of gendered names and titles in centralizing Turkic states. Concerning women in Ottoman society, Togan asserts that they were subject to a repeatedly reinforced patriarchy but controlled their own resources; unlike Central Asians, they were not strongly shaped by homosocial age hierarchies. Relatively strong evidence to support this argument, about lives of Ottoman women beyond the ruling class, can be found in Ottoman judicial records.<sup>[2]</sup> However the evidence that Togan uses to make arguments about pre-modern Central Asian Turk women relies on scattered records concerning women in ruling families, whose experience may or may not reflect changing social norms.

Broad comparisons of social structures also form the basis for Sharon Bastug’s “Tribe, Confederation and State

among Altaic Nomads of the Asian Steppes.” Bastug’s article is dense, and written for those well acquainted with the literature on tribe and state. She argues that Central Asian nomadic social structures are most appropriately understood as segmentary lineage systems. In the segmentary lineage system, geneology and kinship are central elements to all political relationships, but are quite malleable. Descent groups are important to every level of social organization, from the small group that lives and travels together to the royal lineage. However, the system is expandable and makes confederation possible. Bastug’s attention to a precise terminology will benefit students in this field. Bastug’s approach is structural anthropology, and she provides generalizations with limited reference to actual groups. With this emphasis on structure, changes over time are not interrogated; evidence for a point draws equally on the sixth-century Turk Empire and the twentieth-century Qashqai. Norms are sought, while anomalies are ignored. Although Bastug points out the importance of exogamy and marriage alliances to the flexibility and expansion of nomadic groups, this section of her work might be enhanced with questions raised by gender studies. Did emphasis on patriline ever vary? Togan’s article suggests that matriline was often important, but Bastug does not raise any questions related to the gendering of lineage systems.

Lois Geffen’s chapter, “Central Asian Societies and the Oral Literature of Epic Heroes,” discusses the role of oral storytelling in Central Asian societies, laying out an overview of major thematic shifts in Turkic oral epics. Geffen argues that early epics focus on the deeds of a single hero, while later epics set the character within an extraordinary time, turning a folk tale into a sort of history. The most recent of these, such as Koroglu, Geffen classifies as romantic epics. Again, the level of comparative generalization in this chapter leaves the reader wondering about detail: how do we really know how oral epics were told even 300 years ago, let alone in the time of the Kok Turks? Further, if indeed there is an evolution to Central Asian oral epic, why did the forms and themes change? Scholars from the Russian Empire began recording studying Central Asian oral epics several centuries ago and that scholarly tradition continued; it is regrettable that the author of such an ambitious overview refers in her footnotes only to those works (important, but few) that have been translated into German or English. While the author mentions that there are significant women characters in epics, some analysis of the constructions of masculinity and femininity that are presented in epics would be welcome, as would more substantive examina-

tion of the arenas of storytelling that men and women have marked out and reproduce in Central Asian societies.

Two authors, Sherif Mardin and A. Aydin Chechen, focus in part on Jadidism, the late nineteenth and early twentieth century movement among Muslim intellectuals in the Russian Empire for a new style education, and a modernized Muslim public sphere. Mardin examines the intellectual formation and identity politics of Abdurreshid Ibrahim and Zeki Validi Togan. Chechen discusses Jadid pan-Turkism in an article that examines twentieth century Uzbekistan by probing “into the dynamics of the articulation of the discontinuities with underlying continuities in Central Asia” (p. 155).

Mardin seeks background for the Jadid movement in the renewalist (*mujaddidi*) Islam that Nakhshbandi Sufis promoted among Muslims of the Russian Empire in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. By the late nineteenth century, politically active Muslims in the Russian Empire articulated several identities as the basis for unity, reform, and action. Mardin presents Ibrahim (1857-1944) as a product of the Islamic revivalist movement, whose political actions included emigrating to the Ottoman Empire, attacking in print the Russian Empire’s “rule over Muslim populations,” and calling for Muslim *hijra* to the Ottoman Empire. (115) Nonetheless, he returned to Russia in the early twentieth century period of political liberalization, and recruited Tatar *ulema* to join their efforts to those of “secular Muslim intellectuals,” and he helped form a political party, Ittifak.

Mardin emphasizes that Ibrahim’s politics focused on “Muslims,” not on ethnic identity groups. By contrast, Zeki Validi Togan (1890-1970) experienced a multifaceted intellectual formation, first in Jadid *madrasas*, then in reading Western philosophical works in translation, studying Russian and interacting with the Russian academic establishment. Z. V. Togan taught “Turkish” history, and questioned Islam and the Qur’an. During the 1917 Revolution, Z. V. Togan first promoted not a broad politics for Turkic unity, but rather Bashkort autonomy. However, this presentation ignores Togan’s efforts at creating a broader Turkistani opposition to Bolshevism between 1919 and 1923. Mardin points to a number of factors to explain Togan’s promotion of Bashkort identity, versus Ibrahim’s “work of unification,” examining intellectual formation as well as political trends in the Russian Empire.

Chechen’s chapter is a sociological history of Uzbekistan, examining “socio-political evolution,” and Uzbek-

istan’s political economy in the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. The article is comprised of several sections, and the connections between the historical and contemporary sections are unclear. Chechen posits that Ottoman influence was strong in the Jadid period, shaping pan-Turkist ideas among Young Bukharans, Young Khivans, and Turkistani Jadids. He then argues that Jadid thought was not very influential in Central Asia, as is proved by the failure of pan-Turkism and the success, instead, of Soviet nationality policy there. Unfortunately, Chechen relies heavily for this analysis on Zenkovsky and Landau (whose works reflect the writings of Tatar Jadids) and on Tatar Jadid authors like Akchurin, but does not refer to the works written by Central Asian Jadids, or to recent scholarship about them.[3] While some Jadids, especially those who emigrated to Turkey, promoted pan-Turkism inside and outside Russia, a reading of Central Asian Turkistani Jadid works from the early twentieth century would reveal that pan-Turkism was not a primary locus of their politics or identities. A conflation of the pan-Turkists politics of a Tatar leader like Akchurin, with the promotion of Turkistani identity by a Bukharan like Fitrat is a serious misreading of Central Asian Jadidism. The second half of Chechen’s article, only slightly related to the first section, is a brief and direct exposition on the interplay of economic planning and social politics in Uzbekistan during the Soviet and independence period. Concisely and deftly, Chechen explains why independent Uzbekistan chose a secular, authoritarian model of the state, and he takes apart the idea of the “Turkish model” for Central Asia, arguing that what was mooted was neither especially Turkish nor a specific system that provided any unique guideline for socio-political development.

This volume combines a rich set of articles appropriate to diverse interests, each one thought-provoking, and well worth reading. Gunder Frank’s work challenges Eurocentric paradigms, and Togan’s articles present a strong case for rethinking both a periodization of Central Asian history, and evaluating historical vicissitudes in patriarchy in relationship to state formation. The remaining articles are not as bold in their efforts to establish new and “non-Eurocentric” theses, but will be valued by specialists.

My concern with this volume, as with some other recent publications in English about Central Asia, is that even though an extremely important body of scholarship about Central Asia comes from the Soviet and post-Soviet academies (and is published in Russian and in Central Asian languages), the research in these articles does

not interact with that scholarship, but relies on scholarly works published in Turkish, English, French and German. While in some cases this makes no difference, in others the authors seem unaware of arguments that have been made before and sources that might have changed their interpretations substantially.

#### Notes

[1]. Andre Gunder Frank, *Re-Orient: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (Berkeley: University of California, 1998).

[2]. Various articles in the collection, *Women in the Medieval Islamic World*, ed. Gavin Hambly (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).

[3]. Serge Zenkovsky, *Pan-Turkism and Islam in Russia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1960); Jacob Landau, *Pan-Turkism in Turkey: A Study of Irredentism* (Hamden: Archon, 1981), and *The Politics of Pan-Islam: Ideology and Organization* (Oxford: Oxford University

Press 1990). Scholarship that relies on Central Asian Jadid sources, and that argues that they saw identity issues differently than pan-Turkist Tatars did, includes Edward Allworth, *The Modern Uzbeks from the Fourteenth Century to the Present: A Cultural History* (Stanford: Hoover Institute, 1990); Adeeb Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (Berkeley: University of California, 1998), as well as works by Dilarom Alimova, Begali Qosimov, and Hisao Komatsu. Numerous works by Central Asian Jadids were republished in the 1990s, and their newspapers are available in microfilm collections.

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