

Abstract

The article briefly surveys the scoring strategies open to filmmakers in the five Central Asian states that were formerly Soviet republics. Rather than a chronological study, it takes a core set of films and details what their makers chose to do in terms of a range of choices open to them: traditional filmscore, Soviet film music approaches, and local vernacular musical resources, from the point of view of both score and source.

This cinema region is unique, in that it once formed part of a multiethnic state-supported system (1920s-1990), with all directors receiving common training, then turned into a set of sovereign states' film industries. There are some parallels to colonial/postcolonial systems elsewhere in the world, but also distinctive and sometimes countervailing features, such as some local autonomy in soviet times or today's continuing dominance of the Russian market for local film output.

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Central Asian Film Music as a Subcultural System

Mark Slobin

In *Global Soundtracks: World of Film Music* (reviewed in this issue), I offer the term "subcultural cinema" for a body of work produced by minority filmmakers within a multicultural society. The suggestion is that small groups domesticate, reshape, and sometimes oppose the dominant approach to the role and nature of film music, in

this case the system invented in Hollywood. In the United States, African- and Jewish-American filmmakers began this process already in the 1910s, and beginning in the 1960s, groups from Latinos to Asians to queer communities have intensively broadened the scope of subcultural cinema and film music.

Within the heavily bureaucratized Soviet cinema system, it is not easy to sort out the authorial from the subcultural or the national. The renowned filmmaker Sergei Paradjanov was "mainstream" Soviet at first, then deliberately shot an unapproved film of an "exotic" Soviet subculture (the Hutsuls) in *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* (1964). He then made a series of stunning "subcultural" films in his native Armenia that prefigure a post-soviet "national" cinema, all the while remaining strikingly individual.

I recall being impressed with the distinctive flavor of Central Asian cinema when I visited the region in 1968, coming from Afghanistan, which had yet to make its first feature film. In Ashgabat, the Turkmen Composers' Union arranged for a screening of a locally-made film about a musician, and since then, it has struck me that Central Asian cinema occupied a curious status within world film history. Even in the old days of the Russian Empire, in the 1890s, local traditions have always absorbed the global understanding of what music does for movies: "the first Lumière film was screened in Tashkent two years after the premiere in France." (Dönmez-Colin 2001) But beginning in the 1920s, coincidentally with the arrival of sound cinema, filmmakers also had to respond to a local "supercultural" system, that of the USSR. Even in the 1990s, the directors of the now independent, internationally successful, post-soviet Kazakh "new wave" continued the tradition of Russian training that shaped their predecessors. So we are dealing with nested systems almost in the style of the Russian *matryoshka* doll.

The region also introduces new levels of complexity to film music analysis in a number of striking ways, and deserves full-scale treatment. In some ways, this regional film music case offers parallels to colonial situations such as Africa, where postcolonial filmmakers remain dependent on the former masters or other western countries for their main patronage and market. For example, a current Turkmen director can say that Russian television is his country's main audience. This follows the pattern of the Soviet era, when local films were constantly dubbed into Russian for national release. Yet the evolution of cinema in Central Asia was quite different from other world areas. Across the region, the first movies, like the first symphonies and operas, were created by imported European-Russia directors, with the "progressive" aim of training local cadres to take over the work. So

Uzbeks, Tajiks, Turkmens, Kazakhs, and Kyrgyz artists carried the burden of a certain national mission, even while operating within a subcultural framework. Eventually, each Soviet Socialist Republic was supposed to evolve artforms that, in Stalin's formulation, would be "national in form and socialist in content." This was far from an easy process. Developing a local film infrastructure took longer than it did for music, a parallel art form in many ways, due to the inbuilt resistance to visual arts in some Islamic regions. (Binder 2001:23) Eventually, each Republic established its own "Unions" of artists, writers, composers, and filmmakers. Uzbekistan's film studio became an independent entity already in 1961, and the other lands also supported a considerable infrastructure.

So despite parallels to other regions that experienced western cultural and political control, this Central Asian experience is unique. Suppose we tried to find a parallel to a Central Asian director, using the African foundational figure Ousman Sembene. Senegal did not have a pre-independence film system in which Sembene would have been trained. And although he was making his early films at the same time as, say, the Kazakh director Shaken Aimakov, one cannot imagine Sembene shooting a scene in which a French woman comforts an African boy, both having lost their loved ones in wartime. Aimanov's 1966 *Land of the Fathers*, however, reaches its late emotional climax in the understanding between a Russian widow and a Kazakh son who have both lost their men. Perhaps Chinese film history offers something of a parallel, where an omnipotent state cinema system loosened up in the 1980s and allowed for directors to try out new themes and gain international attention. But China did not have the generations of minority-group film students that made a subcultural Central Asian cinema possible, and the minorities did not achieve independence and turn into national cultures.

It is not yet possible to do a thorough survey of all of Central Asian cinema, so this essay concentrates on a sample set of films analyzed from one synoptic perspective: synchronically exploring the range of possibilities, then seeing what filmmakers decided to do. What musical resources did they have, what strategies did they adopt to deploy those materials, and what were the agendas that drove the strategies and choice of resources? The first consideration is that film music appears either as *source*, produced onscreen by the characters, or as *score*, performed by unseen musicians. The two modes can overlap and blend as well as make separate statements. My methodology of choice for this kind of analysis is to consider the *entire* range of music in the soundtrack. It helps to have a complete

inventory of music cues to get an overview of a cinema scene. For Central Asian filmmakers, the situation might look like this:

Resources. 1) conventional symphonic scoring, as developed first in the US in the 1930s; 2) the Russian/Soviet version of symphonic scoring, with its own sound and stereotypes; 3) post-1960 symphonic scoring, with resources from jazz to world music; 4) local folk and popular music as either score or source; 5) a balance of local and Russian musical resources; 6) "simulated vernacular" music as score or source; this is music that the viewer might assume is "authentic," but which is actually a composed approximation of local styles.

Strategies. There are two strategies of interest: the overall aesthetic choice, particularly the range from musical scarcity to density, and specific combinations of types of music. The latter are too numerous to list briefly. But a few possibilities come to mind upon viewing Central Asian films and can stand in for the spectrum: 1) a *dominance* of local sounds that bridges source and score; 2) a *separation* of local music for source and conventional symphonic for the score, where the score can reference more national or "universal" themes; 3) a backgrounding or *erasure* of local source music in favor of the conventional symphonic score; 4) the *replacement* of score by source at specific narrative junctures, or vice versa.

These strategies straddle the pre- and post-independence divide. While it might seem that earlier films would be more straightforward in their use of vernacular materials, given the political dictates, this is not necessarily the case. Music cues are one channel on which artists send messages to their audience, and they can be more subtle and supple than dialogue or plotlines, particularly in the case where the original language is often reduced or suppressed.

Agendas. This is an area for analytical interpretation. Even if filmmakers come up with formulations in writings or interviews, their actual motivations may be rather different, or mixed. Generally, it is probably best to assume multiple agendas as the personal, the local, the national, and the international all figure into specific approaches and tend to shift over time within a studio or among a cohort of filmmakers. So the analyst's job is not to say what anyone "meant to do," but rather to tease out possible lines of thinking that lie behind the soundtrack .

In the Soviet era, the film school and the studios had rather specific, often quite rigid agendas, and felt free to impose their ideological and professional goals on not only fledgling, but even established directors. Composers and music strategies could be assigned by film bureaucrats, rather than be chosen by filmmakers. In the extreme stalinist version of the situation, credits might even be

arbitrarily assigned to members of the team to shield individuals from recrimination. Even specific musical choices might be decided top-down, as Stalin intervened personally at times.

When the republics gained their own studio base, the chain of command ramified. Individual filmmakers naturally try to develop their own personal style, which coexists with moments of co-optation and self-monitoring. The pushback factor always remains crucial to the end result, particularly as the USSR moved into the "Thaw" period after the discrediting of stalinism in the late 1950s, until the clampdowns of the early 1970s. Even today, political control has not disappeared. As Uzbek director Zulfikar Musakov said recently, "I have written many screenplays; if the authorities do not like some, I always have others." (Dönmez-Colin 2006:219) After the independence of the five Central Asian republics in 1991, marketing considerations suddenly added an extra layer of incentive and constraint, as the internationally-successful director Serik Aprimov of Kazakhstan succinctly points out: "When there was money, there was censorship. Now there is no censorship and no money." (ibid.:167) So listening to the movies from this world region is more than a simple exercise in auteur analysis or commercial studio practice.

This short essay cites just a few films that fall along the continuum of strategies sketched out above.

Backgrounding/erasure of local music. *You Are Not an Orphan*, an Uzbek film directed by Shukhrat Abbasov in 1963, lies at the far end of the source/score and local/conventional spectra. Set during the second world war (known locally as the Great Patriotic War), the film chronicles the supportive love and discipline that an Uzbek couple extends to war orphans in Tashkent, the great city of refuge, as they shelter fourteen children of different ethnicities, even including a German boy. One strategic choice might have been to offer varied "national" musics; another would have deployed Uzbek music as a unifying sound to parallel the action. But the film team chose the conventional symphonic score as affective grout for the ethnic mosaic of the narrative.

Separation of local source music and symphonic score. Foundational Kazakh director Shaken Aimanov's 1966 *Land of the Fathers*, another Thaw-era film, presents a subtle range of resources and implied attitudes in its source music. The score, however, stays firmly within the bounds of the national symphonic style, with its Russian-tinged sound and occasional soviet-patriotic or orientalist gestures. The script focuses on a young boy who is traveling with his grandfather from Kazakhstan to deepest Russia to reclaim the body of his father, who fell in the second world war. The two Kazakhs'

relationship to the Russians with whom they share a boxcar, as well as with fellow Kazakhs along the way, offers Aimanov a chance to reflect on the complex interethnic tension and cooperation that marked—and still defines--the Central Asian experience. Egor, a good-hearted but somehow alien Russian, sings and listens to Russian music. There is even an intertextual in-joke, a brief vignette of Russians along the way, with one trying to sell a harmonica to another, who rejects it, even though “it could play Beethoven.” This seems to refer to the complex role of that composer in Soviet cinema (Slobin 2008: 343-50)

Aimanov’s depiction of Kazakh music is the most ambiguous sonic component of the film. The opening scene spotlights the traditional *dombra* lute, credited to a specific musician. This seems like a strong endorsement of local music as a grounding factor in Kazakh life. Other Central Asian films make this establishing move by featuring folk music instead of a conventional symphonic main title theme. Yet another scene offers an ambivalent counterpart, again featuring the *dombra*, in a scene depicting a villager who, for a fee, plays and sings a formulaic song of reassurance for relatives worried about the survival of their soldier son. An onlooker unmasks the bard as a fraud by testifying that the young man has indeed died. Casting doubt on indigenous folk music’s age-old role as moral compass makes a strong statement about Soviet Kazakh society in a subtle way.

Source-score separation and blending in a single film. Melis Ubukeyev’s *White Mountains*, another movie of the immediate post-stalinist Thaw period, is “the first film in which the Kyrgyz recognized themselves.” (Abikeeva 2006:24) Set in an earlier time of conflict, the civil war that pitted Red forces against local resisters in the early 1920s, it deploys a variety of resources and strategies to tell a dark tale of oppression and redemption through self-sacrifice. Following the norms of Soviet cinema, the progressive-looking Red Kyrgyz character sings a Russian folksong to show his loyalties. However, the sadistic Russian sidekick to the evil Kyrgyz tribal leader plays more trivial Russian music on the accordion. Since that instrument played an exalted role in Soviet collective-farm films, Ubukeyev might be making a subtle intertextual dig.

Kyrgyz indigenous sounds appear in two juxtaposed ways. As score (eventually shown to be source), a musician sings a tragic legend about a hunter who accidentally kills his son, perhaps an allegory about the generational distance that the Revolution instigated. The only positive local note is sounded on the jew’s-harp, an instrument often played by Central Asian women. During the film’s one romantic moment, a refugee boy, who has fallen in love with the local girl promised to the evil headman, takes a ramble with her in the dead

of night as they search (but fail to find) a magical herb of happiness. The score kicks in with what would have been a quite progressive electronic-supernatural sound, and the indigenous *chang-kobuz* slowly blends in with this very western sound. A soundtrack like that of *White Mountains* reveals just how hard it is to categorize the disparate materials and strategies that local filmmakers make use of for screenplays that seem politically correct or innocuous, but may suggest deeper layers of meaning. The problem for film analysis is the general lack of reception studies to confirm or refute interpretation, particularly in the case of societies once completely closed and even now perhaps under serious political strictures.

Replacing or complementing local music with post-symphonic scoring. The “magic” music in *White Mountains* already did this in the 1960s, so it is not a novel strategy. 1972’s internationally-recognized Turkmen film, *Daughter-in-law* takes a similar tack, confirming that the Thaw era allowed for some adventurous scoring. The touching story tells of a young rural woman who refuses to accept her husband’s death in the second world war, modestly sustaining the old-style feminine role by taking care of her father-in-law. Perceptively detailing the old nomadic lifestyle, director Khodzhakuli Narliev chose a dominating score based on a spare, atonal, jazz-inflected sound with few oriental hints, rather than actual folk music. This creates a distance between sight and sound, but, tellingly, one that is not based on the cultural space that the symphony orchestra opens up.

The few moments of Turkmen traditional music, then, have extra resonance. We see Ogulkeyk, the daughter-in-law, affectionately embroidering a case for the old man’s *dutar* lute, and he strums it just a bit. Her flashback imaginings of the happy days with her husband Murad take place in a communal setting, the village square, featuring an ensemble of traditional musicians. A key scene tracks the father-in-law anxiously looking for the absent young woman, only to see that she is snatching a rare moment of relaxation by playing on the jew’s-harp, once again the symbol of woman’s acoustic sphere. These short but crucial flashes of folk sound prepare the viewer for the film’s final scene. Community and modernity have gradually encroached on the isolated country setting, and Ogulkeyk is being strongly pushed to rejoin her family and find a new husband. Her resistance is literally underscored by a woman’s voice singing a lamenting song as the movie ends. Again, music carries a mixed message, here combining female agency with traditionalism in a way that only this non-verbal, non-visual medium can carry.

This particular filmscore strategy finds an echo in a radically different movie of the post-independence era, the internationally

recognized Tajik film *Kosh ba Kosh*, by Bakhtiar Chudoinazarov. Set in the Tajik civil war of the early 1990s, the film combines stark depiction of the psychological effect of violence with the story of a young couple, which teeters on the edge of romantic comedy. To aid this edgy narrative blend, the filmscore relies principally on a sparse world music-oriented score with “oriental” overtones on guitar and *dumbek*-style drum with occasional reedy flute for sentiment, something a Hollywood film might have done. Local source music is at a bare minimum. The director explains his stance in answer to an interviewer’s question about whether tradition “plays a role in your films:”

Tradition? Well, I wouldn’t say tradition as pure tradition, certainly not ethnographic...sometimes I see something I don’t like in a film, namely the ethnographic. For that I only need to switch on World Channel...many films, above all those from the East, gladly speculate on the ethnographic tradition and show how someone bakes bread for 30 minutes. One hour long for special rituals, two hours for a wedding celebration—how wonderful! something exotic! (quoted in Krill 2001:35, my translation from the German)

This sounds like Chudoinazarov has seen a film like *Daughter-in-law*, with its long sequences of life with livestock. Nevertheless, he is willing to include a bit of a Tajik women’s lament for a funeral and the viewer occasionally overhears a character singing a folksong. It is hard to remain completely non-ethnographic musically and still retain local color.

Stress on vernacular and simulated vernacular. Kyrgyz director Abkan Abdykalykov’s 1998 film *Beshkempir/The Adopted Son* won awards in three international film festivals and has been widely reviewed and discussed. It is one of those small human interest films about the coming of age of a boy that get mainstreamed in the West. Unlike Chudoinazarov’s rejection of the “ethnographic,” Abdkalykov’s stance is much more pro-tradition: “After the break from the Soviet Union, we were eager to find our roots. In my earlier films, I give prominence to Kyrgyz traditions for the people to remember...now we try to re-evaluate the role of traditions because the country should not isolate itself; it should integrate to the world” (in Dönmez-Colin 2006:191) This attitudinal disagreement reveals just how futile it would be to stereotype even the recent cohort of Central Asian filmmakers when it comes to the nature and balance of musical source and score. As the Tajik director Tachir Sabirov points out, “in Europe you are always talking about waves! We do not have any waves in

Tajikistan. We have some talented film-makers so we can make films. With two or three directors, there is no *wave!*" (ibid.:206)

Beshkempir precisely positions women's folklore at the beginning and end of the film as a narrative frame, first when the ladies gather to bring the foundling-hero into the community through custom and chant, and later when his adoptive mother dies and needs to be lamented. The rest of the film's meager music underscores the boy's coming of age via his budding interest in a local girl. Composer Nurlan Nishanov's score twice measures out small doses of a flute duet that does not sound like Kyrgyz folk music to my ear. Then at the very end of the film, the soundtrack amplifies this simulated vernacular music with modest infiltration of the jew's-harp, already cited twice above as a marker of femininity, and the *kyak*, the horsehair fiddle with its distinctive Kyrgyz sound and echoes of epic singing, as a way of anchoring the earlier more abstract duet in traditional instrumentation and context.

The surprise music in *Beshkempir* appears as an unusual moment of imported source music, something of a rarity in a Central Asian film. The hero goes to an outdoor screening of a Hindi film and watches the gyrations of an old-fashioned Bollywood heroine. The camera follows the fascinated Kyrgyz crowd's absorption into a fantasy world that goes way beyond the local-Russian or vernacular-mainstream set of choices that dominate their life and that of regional film music. In fact, Soviet audiences saw a lot of Hindi films, so it can stand in for a kind of tradition of its own, while simultaneously suggesting a possible new orientation towards fresh aesthetic resources for contemporary cinema. Perhaps this is what director Abdikalikov means by saying "the country should not isolate itself; it should integrate to the world." (ibid.:187)

Carefully balanced resources in source and score. For this approach, one can look at two films, one Thaw, one late 1990s, with radically different philosophies, narratives, and aesthetic to see how a strategy can carry across a variety of situations.

The foundational Tajik director Boris Kimyagarov shot *Hasan-arbakesh* in 1965. Set (once again) in the unstable period of consolidation of Soviet power, the film's hero, Hasan the cart driver, a salt-of-the-earth but politically unaware member of the emerging Tajik proletariat, undergoes a transformation as he falls in love with a young woman who also moves to activism by taking the place of a murdered teacher. Tajik folksong and instrumental music appear plentifully, especially at the opening as the main title and an early wedding scene. The wedding procession is quickly juxtaposed with the teacher parading her students, as they play and sing a Soviet school march.

This suggests the kind of ambivalence about vernacular music that runs through other regional films. The long opening wedding sequence grounds the local culture. We hear frame drums and women singing folk wedding songs. Later, the mood of weary workers is voiced through the *ghichak*, the small fiddle, just before a brief reprise of a wedding chorus.

Meanwhile, the other filmic elements take their distance from tradition. The film score's main theme is a simulated vernacular, somewhat orientalized symphonic setting used either as mood-setter or, with romantic instrumentation, for the couple's relationship. This move, found in other films, trace back to the nineteenth-century Russian presence in the region and the creation by Russian composers of "eastern" concert music, such as Borodin's *In the Steppes of Central Asia*. The Soviet period bureaucratized this into structures such as conservatories and an ideology that posited, as Ted Levin puts it, the eventual development of monophonic Central Asian music into European-style harmonic music.", as "Russian performers, composers and music historians came, or were sent, to Tashkent to teach native cadres the tools, styles, and techniques of Western music...and how to use the folk idiom as a source of melodic material." (Levin 1996: 13-14), including film score composition.

Given this level of indigenization of local music cultures, which already began in the 1920s, a culturally layered soundtrack does not represent "east" and "west," but rather a relationship to the system as developed in the soviet era. On this model, in *Hasan-arbakesh*, all the music is in some sense "local," while at the same time the filmmaker is careful to also create a distance between purely vernacular source material, as in the opening wedding sequence, and the orchestra's takeover of vernacular sound, for example when the score adds a jew's-harp (here not necessarily feminized) for traveling music as the hero's cart gallops through the countryside, or slides in to amplify the main character's romantic yearnings.

It is easy to sustain this kind of careful balancing in a film that decides to offer the audience an abundance of music cues, but it can also be helpful for a movie with minimal music. *Aksuat*, a 1998 film, from Serik Aprimov, a leader of what the west calls "the Kazakh Wave," makes the choice of sparse music cited above for other post-independence movies, *Kosh ba Kosh* and *Beshkempir*. But he does it differently. This bleak yet human film takes place in the distant village of Aksuat, to which one brother, Kanat, arrives with his pregnant Russian wife, Zhana, under the supervision of the local brother, Aman. Aman is successful in the new economy, while Kanat is not. Kanat gets into trouble, abandons the wife, and at the end, Aman ships Zhana

and her newborn back to Russia. The local society is presented as a hotbed of corruption and sometimes colorful characters, such as Erbolat.

There is very little music, but it counts. Both Kanat and Aman absent-mindedly pick up the *dombra* and strum it, seemingly identifying the two as true Kazakh males, whereas Erbolat does the same with a guitar, the quintessential instrument of the Russian folk-pop world. As none of this is explained, the viewer has to sort it out. This absent-minded plucking is nearly the only source music, aside from a women's lament, which, as we have seen, seems a standard regional way for filmmakers to gesture towards ethnography and women's role. But this female sound is balanced by a scene in which some local women prepare to party for payment, accompanied by a Kazakh pop song. That is the sum total of the source music, which seems carefully balanced between Russian and Kazakh resources. The score appears late in the movie, after Zhana gives birth and brings the baby home. A sentimental-sounding song in Russian style with vibraphone backup, but without a song-text, suffuses the scene. A jazzier version of this chamber jazz sound returns at the conclusion, as Zhana leaves town; again, the language is deliberately obscured. Judging by names, the JCS band appear to be a trio that is mixed Russian and Kazakh, and their closing-credit number contains both Russian and Kazakh vocals. A Central Asian scholar's review refers to the "visceral and heartbreaking musical score," (Abikeeva 2003) and it must have helped the film win prizes in Almaty, Tokyo, and Rotterdam, since the narrative and visuals offer so little immediate pleasure.

It's no wonder Aprymov tries to balance things out in today's Kazakhstan. Here's what he says about language and why he's shooting his new film in Russian; imagine how it also might apply to music choices: "...because all children in Almaty speak Russian...Many Kazakhs do not know their language. When I grew up, my sister told me to speak Russian. Without speaking Russian, you could not get higher education. Now that everyone speaks Russian, there is another problem; we need to speak English." [quoted in Dönmez-Colin 2006:167) This sort of issue leaves open a discussion as to whether Central Asian cinema remains in some sense subcultural, even when the five former republics have achieved full political sovereignty.

Linguistically and musically, Darezhan Omirbaev's most recent film, *Chouga* (2007) echoes the sparseness and selective balance of *Aksuat*. A retelling of the Anna Karenina storyline set among the upper classes of today's Kazakh cities, the movie features no score and precious little source music, so each appearance counts. Kazakh pop codes the amorality of Ablai, the Vronsky character, particularly at a

strip club he frequents. Russian rap fills the city bus that Chouga, the Anna character, takes to her fatal meeting with a train at film's end. The wedding of the "happy," if heavily burdened, younger couple allows for a brief flourish of *dombra* music as symbol of cultural grounding. But the main musical set-piece finds the principals at the opera house, watching one of those Central Asian music dramas written by Russian composers as models for emerging modern Soviet music cultures. As the nascent adultery and heartbreak signaled by the smoldering glances in the audience play out, the camera lingers on the opera's typical mise-en-scene. There, Western stage and compositional conventions dominate, but are offset by a Kazakh libretto and momentary breakthroughs of indigenous vocal genres and instrumental stylings. This stage-struck moment, which parallels similar scenes in western and Soviet cinema of romantic concert-hall bonding (Slobin 2008: 339-40) gives music its best shot at complementing the film's stark and sparse narrative trajectory, bilingualism, and local-modern dichotomies.

Closing Thoughts

1. Though Central Asian cinema shares some features with other global film experiences, it occupies a distinct niche. The integration of local filmmakers into a state apparatus is an unusual prelude to the post-independence creation of national cinemas. The nesting of local, Russian, and world marketing of the films presents special challenges. Music continues to play a key role in establishing both locale and individual style.
2. Periodization does little to define the resources, strategies, and agendas of the creative team. No straight line or clear separation divides the 1960s from the 1990s; rather, at all times, filmmakers remain responsive to a wide range of possibilities.
3. Artists combine a variety of approaches in unpredictable ways that might vary from country to country. Kyrgyz director Aktan Abykalikov surveys the scene this way: "I think Kyrgyz films have a more melancholic but at the same time more brusque way of looking at life, which could be interpreted as typical of the mountain people. The Kazakhs are more introspective in their films reflecting the steppe mentality. Uzbek films are more extravagant, even kitsch. Cultural differences have become more pronounced within the film industries after the fall of the Soviet Union." While this is obviously a purely personal opinion, it indicates a range of subregional filmmaking outlooks that doubtless would emerge from a deep survey of the film music of the post-independence cinema scene.

4. As a result of these crosscutting variables, no stable “interpretation” can nail down the nature of Central Asian film music, which has always been an improvisation on folk and national themes, to which the global market perspective has added new dimensions. Any serious study of this fascinating regional cinema system will need to take account of music as a characteristic and strikingly salient feature.

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*This boxed set contains the films discussed in the present essay. It is not available commercially, but is held at sixteen libraries, including Leeds and Oxford in the UK, and Trinity College, University of Arizona, Indiana University, and University of Chicago, among others, in the US, according to WorldCat.

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