

# Eurasia Week 8: The Turkic Resurgence





The **Burana Tower** (preceding slide) is outside of Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

It was built in the 11<sup>th</sup> C. by the **Kharakhanids**, a Turkic silk road state.

The tower is 148 ft high, it used to be taller before earthquakes, but feels adequately tall for me. The internal staircase is terrifying, especially with small children.

When I lived in Kyrgyzstan (2001-2002) I knew very little about the larger Turkic cultural revival that was emerging as Soviet/Russian influence retreated.





The stone figures are **Balbals** (father stones) and marked Turkic graves from 9-19<sup>th</sup> c.





The faces are distinct and many carry a tea bowl or sword.



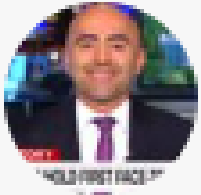


Deer Stones of Mongolia another kind of grave marker.

Short film of National Geog. Project on Deer stones at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lvD0Zmkptxc&t=168s>



This week's contemporary culture roundup: First, the Turkic/Ottoman mark on Europe is always a popular social media theme, as in this Oct 2022 example. One thing that struck me in Turkey was critical people were of how Europe had erased the Ottoman/Turkic imprint on European history.



**Soner Cagaptay**  @SonerCagaptay · 9h 

European politicians with Ottoman-sourced names:

Danilo Türk (Slovene Prime Minister)

Aleksandar Stamboliyski (Bulgarian Prime Minister)

Petar Stambolić (Pres of Yugoslav Presidency)

Milan Hodža (Czechoslovak Prime Minister)

Konstantinos Karamanlis (Greek Prime Minister + Pres)





And a few other names added in the Twitter comments:

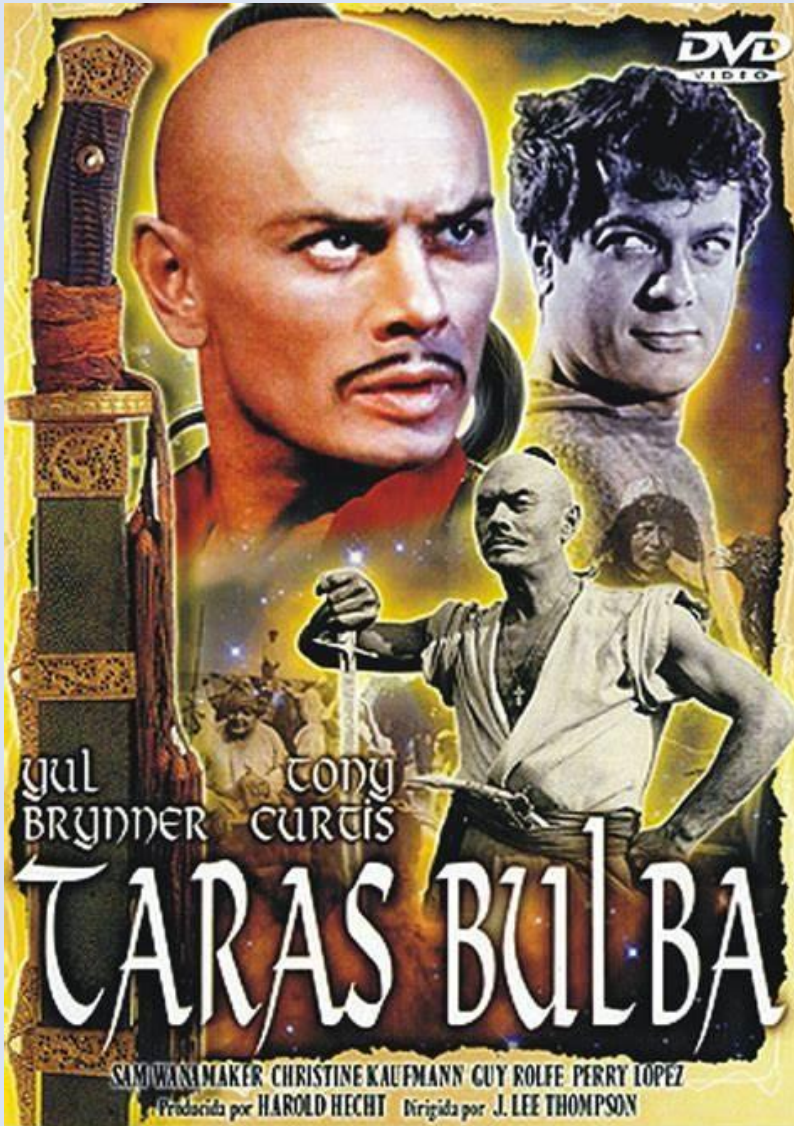
**Stefan Stambolov** (1854-95) 1<sup>st</sup> Prime Minister of Independent Bulgaria, 1880s

**Enver Hoxha** (named after Enver Pasha) 1908-85. 1<sup>st</sup> Secretary of Communist Party, Albania. Born in Gjirokaster, Albania, when it was still part of the Ottoman Empire. This is an Ottoman-era house from Gjirokaster.





## 2<sup>nd</sup> item: *Taras Bulba*, 1962 film and a 2009 remake



Last week one of the students mentioned this 1962 film, but I see that there was a 2009 film with a significantly different plotline:

1962 film: In 16<sup>th</sup> c Ukraine , Cossacks and Polish Nobles must put aside their differences to unite against the Turkish invaders!!”

2009 film: The Cossacks fight the Polish invaders!

The geopolitical shift has provoked some commentary in Poland about Russian hostility...





3<sup>rd</sup> item: A 2020 article on the debut of a common Turkic history textbook for use across Central Asia.

This is probably the most successful project of the Council of Turkic States.



<https://eurasian-research.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Weekly-e-bulletin-17.02.2020-23.02.2020-No-247.pdf>



# Okay, now back to the Rus – Turkic Frontier.

Last week we finished with a discussion of the Circassians as Refugees from Russian expansion (1800s).

They played a key part in the Ottoman military through WWI, and are still heavily represented in the Security institutions in modern Turkey.

There are about 3 million in the diapora today.

(19<sup>th</sup> c. depiction of a Circassian leader, right)





# Another group of diaspora Turks: The Meshketian or Ahiska Turks: 1.5 m in Turkey today.

The Russians referred to all Muslims in the empire as “Turks” but the Ahiska Turks, from the Georgia section of the Black Sea, did speak a Turkic language.

Some fled to Ottoman lands in the 19<sup>th</sup> c., others remained only to be deported by Stalin to Central Asia in 1944 under brutal conditions.

They became targets of violent ethnic attacks in the 1980s and were offered refuge in Turkey.



Ahiskan Turks in Turkey today: “14 November, 1944, We have not forgotten” and the “Ahiska Exile”.



## Karabuk University 2019 presentation on the Ahiska deportations

“Stating that today's Meskhetian Turks still live in difficult conditions, Dr. Dedeođlu said, “Ahiska is a bleeding wound not only in Turkish history but also in the whole world.”

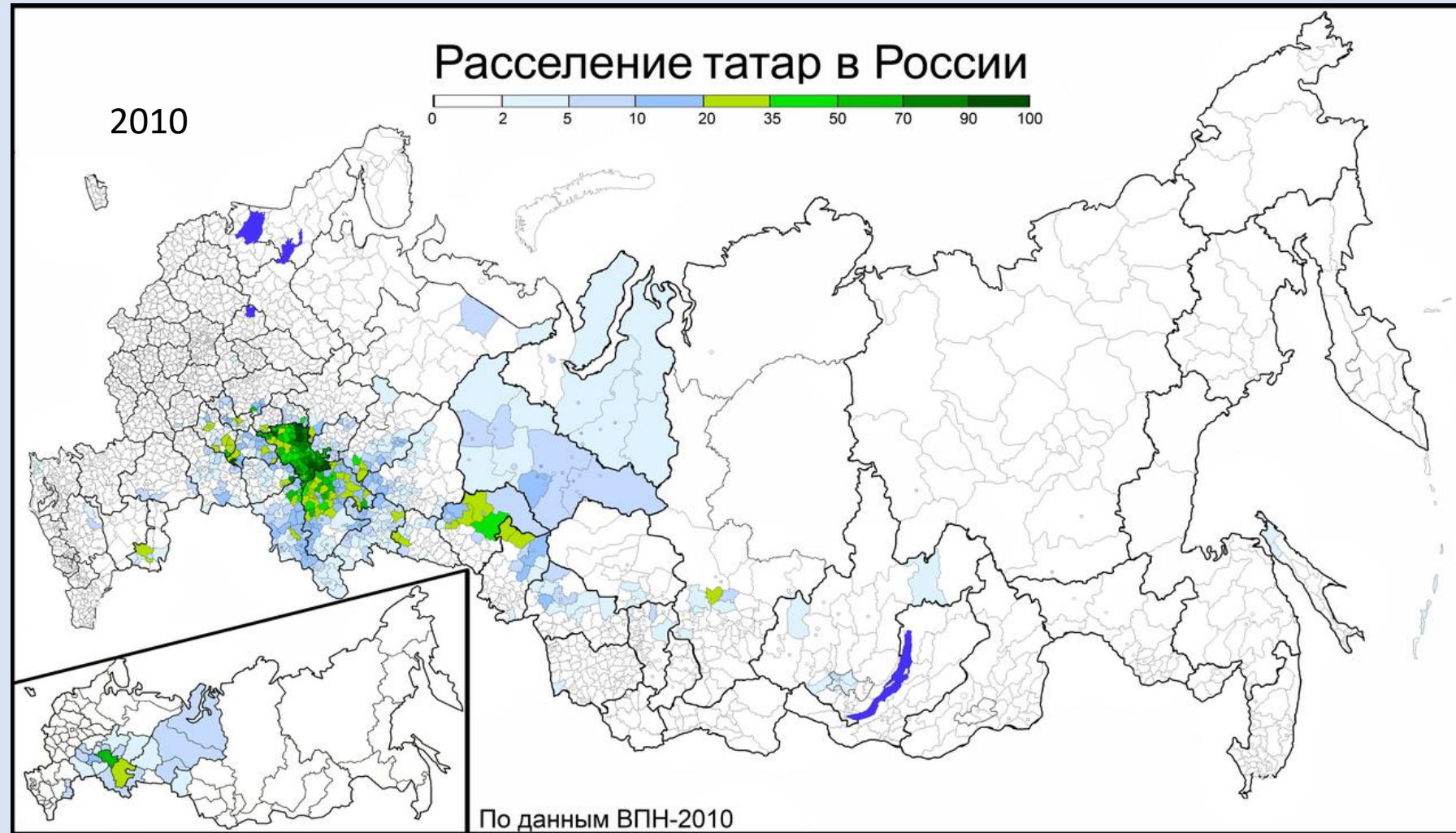


<https://kulliye.karabuk.edu.tr/kbude-ahiska-turklerinin-surgunu-ele-alindi/>



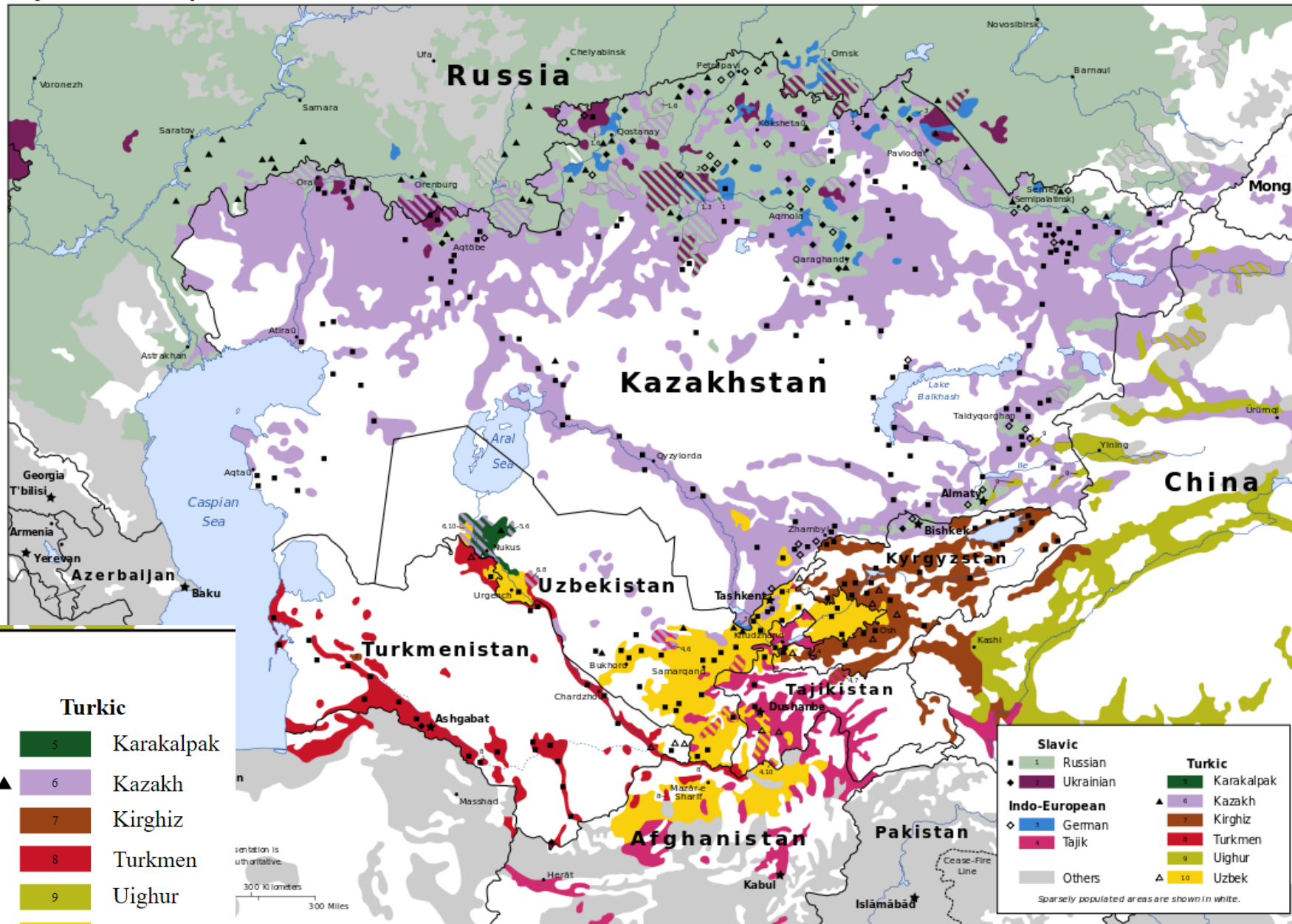
# The Tatars, another Turkic diaspora group

- More than 5 million in Russia today identify as **Tatar** (Turkic)
- Russian history and contemporary discussions regard them as a minority, but Turkic historians see the Tatar base as a significant part of the Russian genetic makeup.
- They were dominant through the 1400s and mixing was common, many Russian noble families had Tatar origins
- Map (right) of distribution of the 5 million who see themselves as pure Tatar in Russia, 2010.





# Major Ethnic Groups in Central Asia



Ethnic map  
Central Asia  
2020.

The Russian population never really moved beyond into the Steppe areas in large numbers and has shrunk since 1991.

- Slavic**
- 1 Russian
- ◆ 2 Ukrainian
- Indo-European**
- ◇ 3 German
- 4 Tajik
- Others

- Turkic**
- 5 Karakalpak
- ▲ 6 Kazakh
- 7 Kirghiz
- 8 Turkmen
- 9 Uighur
- ▲ 10 Uzbek



Population: 16.9 million



Population: 4.6 million



Population: 5.7 million



Population: 4.3 million



Population: 21.6 million

<b>Slavic</b>	■ 1 Russian	◆ 2 Ukrainian
<b>Indo-European</b>	◇ 3 German	■ 4 Tajik
■ Others		
<b>Turkic</b>	■ 5 Karakalpak	▲ 6 Kazakh
	■ 7 Kirghiz	■ 8 Turkmen
	■ 9 Uighur	▲ 10 Uzbek

Sparsely populated areas are shown in white.

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China took control of Xinjiang c. 1750; Russia into Central Asia in 1800s.



# 2014 article

[https://www.rbth.com/world/2014/08/25/russian\\_exodus\\_continues\\_from\\_central\\_asia\\_37791](https://www.rbth.com/world/2014/08/25/russian_exodus_continues_from_central_asia_37791)

Kyrgyzstan – Russians shrink from 25% to 7% of the population

Turkmenistan 50% have left

Uzbekistan Russians from 30 to 3% of the population

Overall, more than 70% of the 10 million ethnic Russians present in 1990 have left Central Asia.

## Russian exodus continues from Central Asia

AUG 25 2014 SPECIALLY FOR RIR VICTORIA PANFILOVA



City centre of Astana. Source: Alamy / Legion Media



Follow Russia Beyond on  Telegram

Facing an uncertain future for the Russian language and dim economic prospects, a growing number of ethnic Russians are emigrating from former Soviet Central Asian republics.

Former Soviet republics in Central Asia are turning more and more into mono-ethnic countries, as a large number of ethnic Russians leave for greener pastures.



# Current move reversing the Russian ethnic engineering of the 1800s and 1900s

Pre 1800 the Russian Expansion focused on replacing Islam with Orthodox Christianity. 418 out of 536 mosques destroyed, others converted.

Turkic language groups were repressed in 1800s Russian-only education policy, leading to a widespread revolt (and more deportations) in 1916.

After 1920s, most deportations moved people from the West to Central Asia as labor for the Cotton industry. Some were moved as individuals into political exile, but others, like the Ahiska Turks and Volga Germans, were moved by Stalin for both geopolitical and labor reasons.



## Ozbek Han Mosque, Ukraine. 1314 ce. (Ottoman)

An Orthodox church for centuries, it was refurbished with Turkish aid in the past ten years. Turkey has been refurbishing Ottoman heritage in the region.

Next page: Two Mosques in Crimea, 15<sup>th</sup> c. Mosque designed by the famed Ottoman Architect Mimar Sinan, and a recent Turkey funded new mosque begun in 2012 but on hold since 2014 Crimean War. (<https://www.middleeasteye.net/discover/ukraine-islam-mosques-most-important-look>)









Large scale cotton farming began in the Imperial Era as Russia struggled to create a domestic textile industry in the 1870s.

The need for labor for RR construction and cotton fields drove feudalistic laws requiring nomads to report for labor brigades.



Receiving of cotton in Kokand.

Wilhelm Garteveid



Central Asia proposed map 1922 and final map, 1930. Borders created in Moscow after much debate. Place all the Turkic groups together? Divide so as to make them easier to manage?

The different Turkic language dialects could have been combined. Kazakh and Kyrgyz are the most similar still.

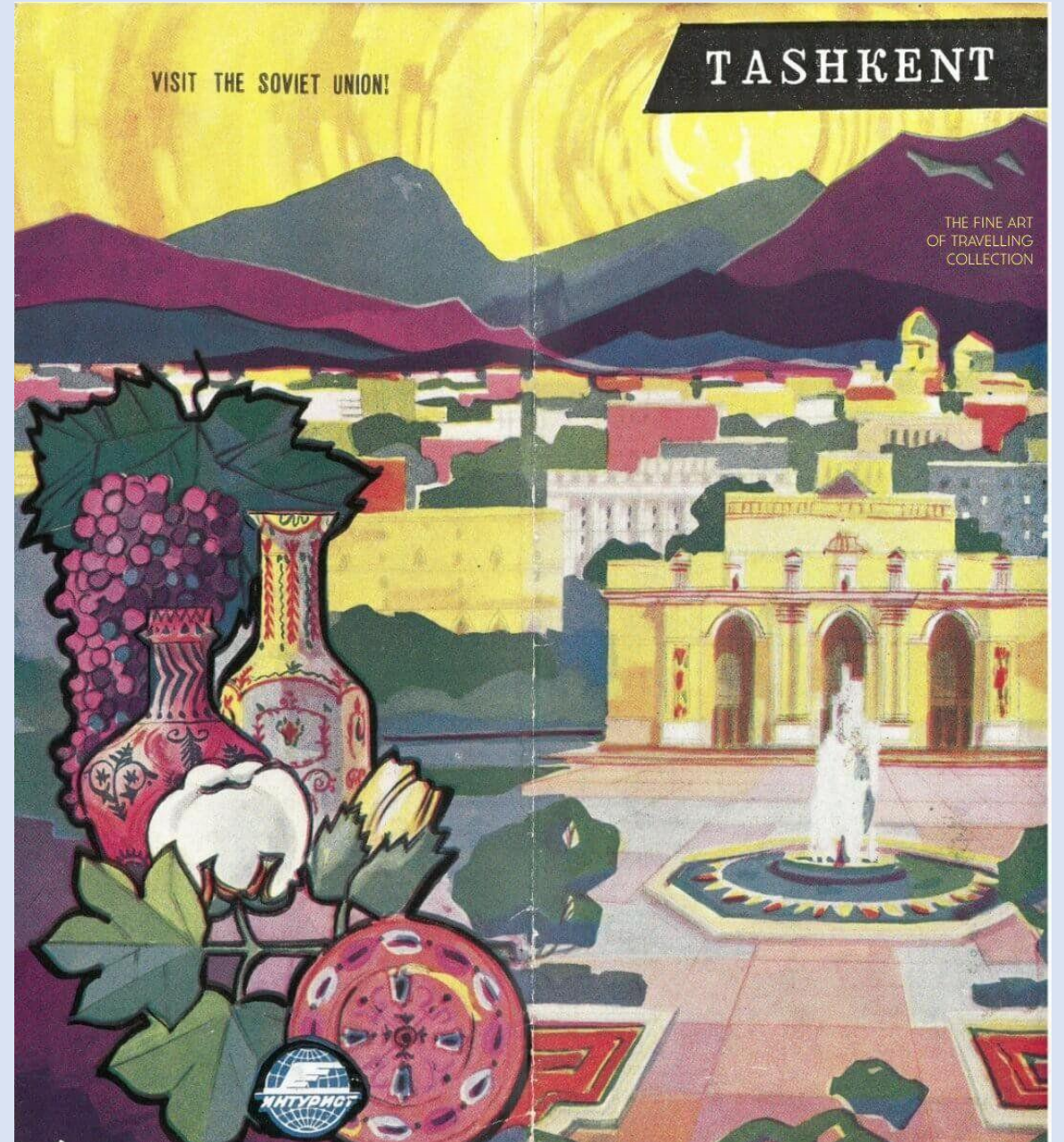


# Coat of Arms of Turkmenistan and Uzbek SSRs, 1924. Designed in Moscow! (of course)





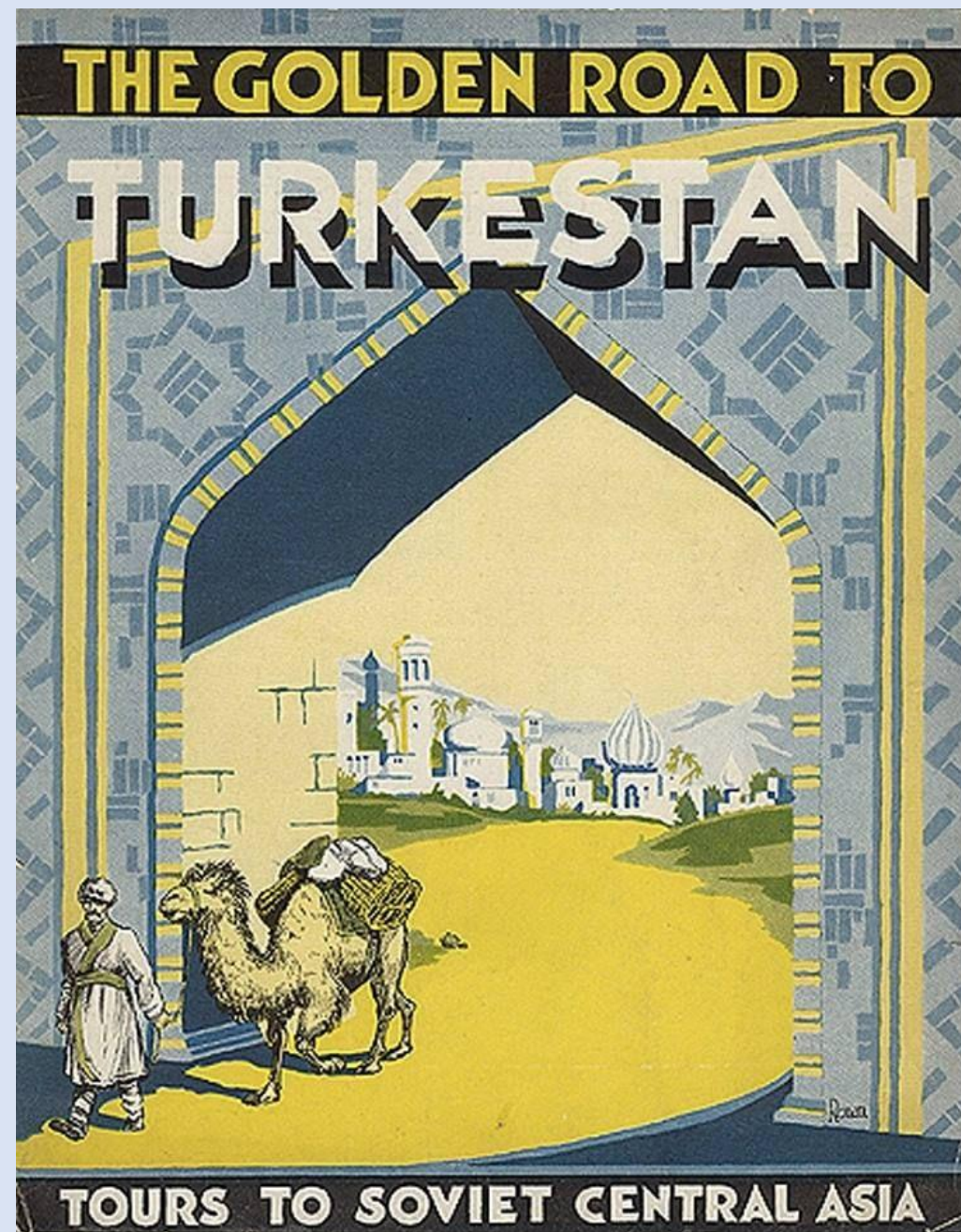
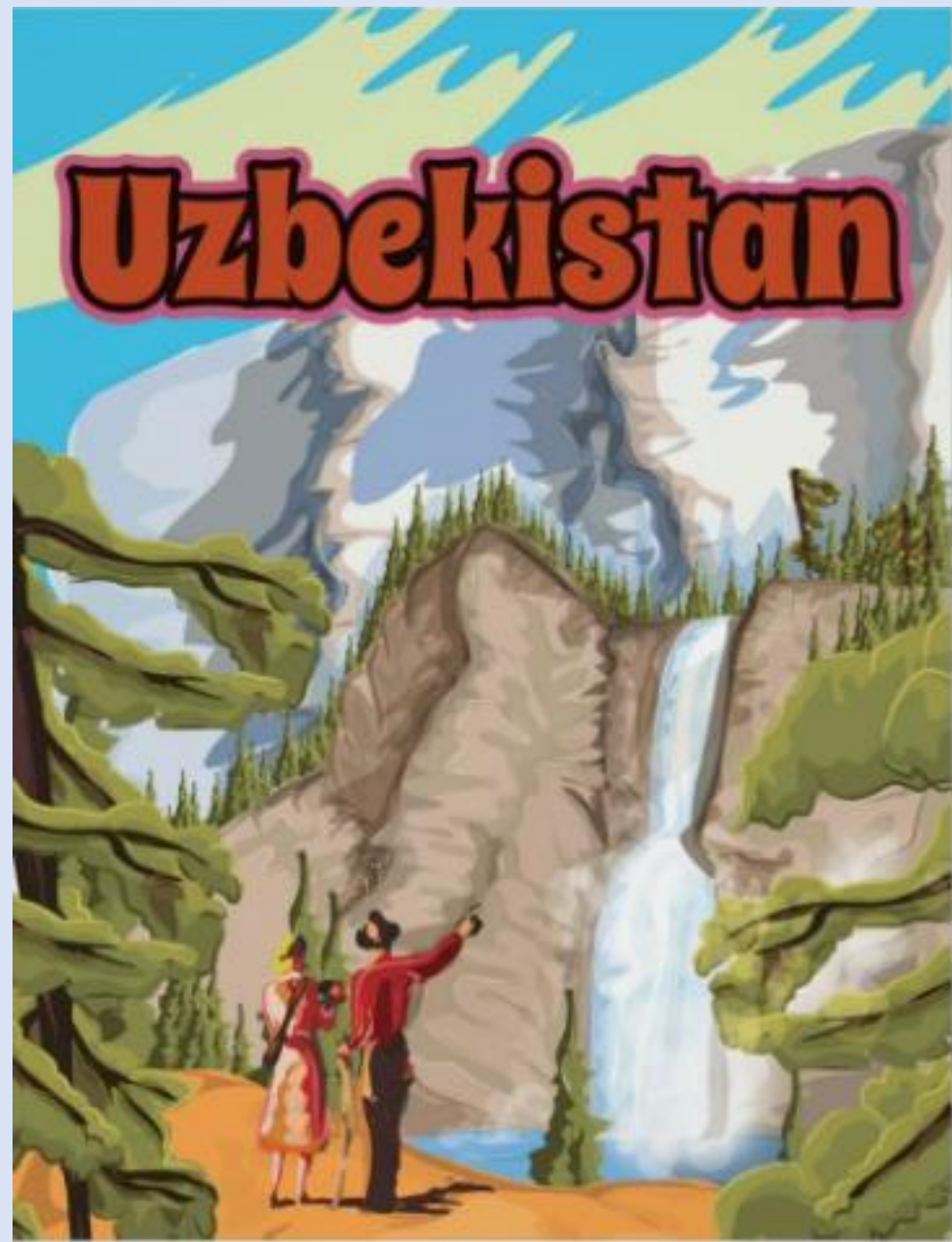
Ironically, the USSR using exoticism of the Turkic areas to lure Tourists from the 1920s on.













**Decolonizing History:** Since the 1990s Central Asian countries are presenting their own version of the Russian/Soviet years. They are reacting especially to a recent Russian spate of public statements about the benevolence of Russian and Soviet rule in the region. This new (2021) Kazakh Film, new school curriculum, photo exhibits, gulag tours...all show continuing anger over the Russian/Soviet era.

## New Kazakh film seeks to tell truth of Soviet terror

Kazakh filmmakers are telling the stories of national heroes who stood against Stalin's dictatorship. The most recent is about writer and public figure Akhmet Baitursynov.

By Kanat Altynbayev

2021-12-01



Character of (General) Akhmet Baitursynov in film about Akhmet Baitursynov can be seen in



2018 article  
on Kazakh  
museum-  
prison

# Russian attempts to justify Stalin's Great Terror re-open old wounds in Central Asia

Alexander Bortnikov, director of the Russian Federal Security Service, said in a recent interview the executions during the 1930s 'had an objective side to them'.

By Arman Kaliyev

2018-01-10





Astana  
museum  
diorama of  
children  
separated  
from  
mothers in  
the Gulag



For an example of the current Russian history praising the Russian/Soviet era, see this photo-journalism piece at:

<https://www.rbth.com/history/332235-soviet-central-asia-photo>

The happy children and collectivized farmers not really the way locals saw Russian/Soviet rule.

One of the main tasks facing the USSR was the elimination of illiteracy, and so, new schools, including those for adults, were set up all over the country. Tuition was in Russian and in local languages. Children were taught to love the Communist Party and Lenin from an early age. Many pioneers from Central Asia were awarded with visits to both the capitals of their republics and Moscow.



## Collective farmers

Collectivization, i.e. the process of merging individual peasant farms into collective farms, was carried out in the Central Asian republics. People from all over the USSR poured into the region. They ploughed virgin lands and developed agriculture.





These photos of forced labor show a different reality.





# 2016 controversy over government “voluntary labor” in Uzbekistan Cotton fields. This Soviet tradition still persists.

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December 11, 2016 4:23AM EST | Dispatches

## European Parliament May Rubber Stamp Forced Labor in Uzbekistan

### One Million People, Including Doctors and Teachers, Forced to Pick Cotton Each Year

 **Philippe Dam**  
Advocacy Director, Europe and Central Asia Division  
[@Philippe\\_Dam](#)

More than one million people are forced to work during the harvest season in Uzbekistan’s cotton fields under appalling conditions – doctors and nurses pulled out of hospitals, students driven out of universities. It’s an annual outrage committed by the government of Uzbekistan, whose elites live rich off the harvest’s proceeds.

And the European Parliament may be about to give this system its stamp of approval.





# Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan Opera House, 1930

The opera house was one of our favorite spots in Bishkek, and the Kyrgyz loved Russian operas even in 2001-2! They filled the space to watch Prince Igor and Swan Lake, etc.

Inside (next two slides) you could be forgiven for thinking you are in St. Petersburg, except for the Turkic peoples marching toward the future.













Kyrgyz opera combined Russian style presentation with Kyrgyz themes in the 1930s work of Maldybaev.

Here, a 2019 performance of *Ai-Churek* by A. Maldybaev, a Kyrgyz composer who used *Manas* stories and Kyrgyz folk stories.







Maldybaev on the 1 som note of Kyrgyzstan.



Turkmenistan currency with Oghuz Khan  
(legendary founder of the 1<sup>st</sup> Turkic Khaganate)





There is so much more to explore about this Turkic resurgence but we have to end here! From the use of Turkic epics in European style opera, to the recovery of Turkic leaders in newly installed statues in Turkey, or currency notes in Kazakhstan, or the new sense of historical solidarity evident in pushing back against Russian/Soviet versions of the past, there is much evidence of a Turkic revival. The Turkic world, which stretched from the Balkans to Mongolia, has not disappeared at all.

I am ending with a photo of a Kyrgyz Tourist camp outside of Bishkek. I hope you all enjoyed learning more about this part of the world!



